



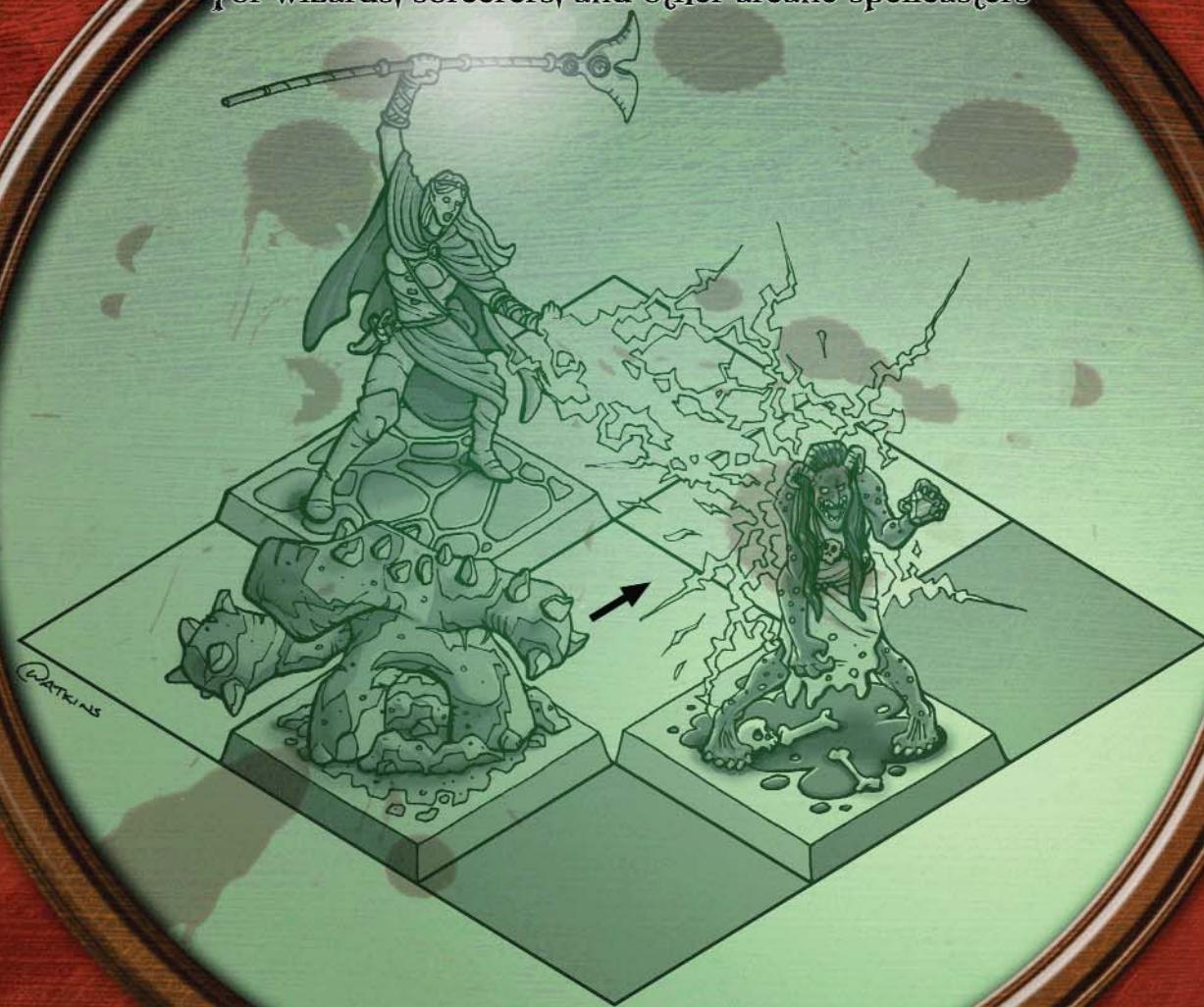
The Power Gamer's 3.5

d20  
system

# WIZARD

## Strategy Guide

For wizards, sorcerers, and other arcane spellcasters



The 100% Official  
Guide to Kicking Monster Butt  
and Winning the Game



# The Power Gamer's 3.5

# WIZARD

## Strategy Guide

The 100% Official Guide to Kicking Monster Butt  
and Winning the Game—Mage Style!

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# Introduction

# Welcome to the Wizard Strategy Guide

or «Using Arcane Magic to Dominate the Game»

When Joseph Goodman approached me about the development of a Wizard Strategy Guide to complement the popular Power Gamer's 3.5 Warrior Strategy Guide, I was immediately interested in tackling the topic. I far prefer mages and arcane types to simple beat sticks—if you can survive the perils of low levels and really grow into your role. The problems, of course, are surviving long enough to get to that stage in your arcane career and then making the most out of your newfound powers.

I knew this book would be an invaluable tool to players yearning to master the secrets of arcane magic. But while brainstorming the structure and content of the Wizard Strategy Guide, it soon became clear that the rules and restrictions for optimizing mages are quite different than the rules for warriors—more so than we thought at first glance.

## Warriors, Stand Aside

Warriors, despite the numerous weapons and feat combinations, are far easier to develop if you apply pure mathematics and statistical probabilities. In many instances, you can base nearly any warrior optimization around the “hit it harder” principle. You know, the principle that states the harder you hit *it* (the bad guy), the better you are as a warrior. Well, things aren’t quite so simple for mages, since arcane magic can not only “hit it harder” but perform a wide variety of other useful functions... such as “don’t let it hit us,” or one of my personal favorites “keep it still while the warriors hit it harder.”

These are just a few of the distinctions particular to practitioners of arcane magic:

► **Base Attack Bonus:** There is no linear benchmark of increasing mage power like there is for the warrior’s Base Attack Bonus. BAB “stacks” and works the same way whether you’re a single classed fighter or a multiclassed barbarian/ranger. This meant devising a new means of comparing power and utility between spell casters of various levels.

► **More Than Just a Weapon:** Spells and spell-like abilities (such as those conferred by created magical items) vary far more than weapons. To min/max a warrior, there are fewer characteristics or effects to consider when selecting your primary means of dealing damage. A weapon is defined by its base damage, size, reach, critical range and critical multiplier. Spells have far more factors impacting their effectiveness. Mages also have a variety of spell schools to choose from, save DCs to worry about, spell resistance to overcome, and numerous damage options (direct damage, damage over time, indirect damage, buffs that enhance another’s damage, etc).

► **More Combat Options:** Each archetype from the warrior guide, eventually, deals with how a warrior can deal damage to an enemy via ranged or melee combat. Even with feats and maneuvering, it comes down to this fundamental interaction. Mages, due to the sheer volume of spells available, have a variety of combat options in addition to their formidable damage potential (such as summoning creatures, spells that buff or debuff targets, holding targets for others to attack).

► **Metamagic Feats:** There is no comparable game mechanic for warriors like the metamagic feats for mages. While several of them are “flavor” feats (as pointed out in this guide), many have a pronounced impact on spell effectiveness. The balance between a metamagic feat’s additional casting level modifier and the impact on the spell effect are important considerations.

► **Size Really Does Matter:** Ahem—party size, that is. The larger the party, the more “damage” a mage can inflict through party optimization spells or indirect means, such as buffing (*bull’s strength*), impairing (*ray of enfeeblement*) or simply locking down foes for the warriors (*hold monster*). The smaller the party is, the more pivotal a mage’s role may be in damage output. As such, party size is a factor to consider when discussing spell selection.

So in your hands you hold a powerful tool, one that the addle-brained fighters won't understand and barbarians can't even read. But in the hands of a mage, this book is a priceless source of useful information, offering spell optimization tips, tricks to get the most bang for your buck (er, gold piece) when purchasing equipment, and comparisons of the damage potential for a variety of arcane spells and numerous combat strategies.

### Credit where Credit is due

Major kudos to Glyn Dewey and Anthony Pryor for all their hard work on this project. We set an ambitious goal to cover a lot of topics while making the information you need easy to read and easy to find. It had to be insightful and informative, applicable to existing mages or mages built from scratch, and discuss the nuances of a mage and his potential as objectively as possible. As you'll soon find out, Glyn and Anthony did an excellent job. All the while, Joseph's mantra provided the necessary focus to our writing:

*No matter what you're writing, it better answer the core question, "Will this help my mage kick ass?"*

So with that in mind, I'm pleased to present you with the *Power Gamer's 3.5 Wizard Strategy Guide*—the 100% Official Guide to Kicking Monster Butt and Winning the Game, *mage style*. Yes, Joseph, this guide will definitely make your mage kick ass.

### Using this Book

Think of this book as a “cheat book” for 3.5 mages. Just like a cheat book for your favorite video game helps you unlock killer combos and dominate the game, this guide will help you do the same things with your mage. We've taken the information from the 3.5 core rules and analyzed all the angles, churned through stats, and compared spells, feats and equipment until our brains couldn't take it any more.

You get to sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Once you familiarize yourself with the type of role your mage plays in your campaign, you can easily find dozens of tips and tricks to making your mage even better.

Rather than read this book cover-to-cover (which you'll want to do eventually, anyway), start out by skimming through the chapters that interest you most. If you want to improve an existing mage, you might want to start out looking through Chapter Five: Classes & Archetypes, Chapter Six: Spell Selection by Archetype and Chapter Seven: Equipment. If you're creating a brand new mage, Chapters One through

Five will prove the most useful, in turn, as you build your mage brick by arcane brick. And everyone will benefit from reading Chapter Eight: Combat to pick up some tricks you can apply to your very next encounter.

Finally, the appendixes provide charts and tables of great information, allowing players to see the impact that development options will have on their mage's abilities—how much extra damage will your *fireball* do if you increase the required Reflex save by 1? How difficult will it be to overcome a devil's spell resistance if I decide to pick up Greater Spell Penetration? And so on.

---

## What Kind of Mage are You?

Similar to the structure of the Warrior Strategy Guide, the Wizard Strategy Guide breaks down the different types of mages into archetypes. These archetypes define a particular role that a mage fulfills within a party. Unlike the Warrior Strategy Guide, not every archetype is designed for the express purpose of optimizing your damage output, and many can be mixed and matched to create mages ready to face anything their GMs can throw at 'em.

Since there are only two core classes that directly deal with arcane magic—the sorcerer and the wizard—we use archetypes as the basis of discussing the different ways a mage applies his abilities to an adventuring party. While bards technically cast arcane magic, the limited scope of the bard spell list and hybrid class abilities are too incomparable to the wizard and sorcerer to include them in the same conversation.

In the context of this guide, the term mage refers to either a sorcerer or wizard interchangeably. When we need to make note of one of the two primary classes, it will be specifically indicated (such as a wizard's option of selecting school specialization at first level).

The archetypes are blaster, controller, saboteur, and support specialist. These archetypes apply a type of filter to a mage's abilities, allowing them to focus on one of four key roles a dominant mage will assume in a party. Each role can be specialized and improved through feats, spell selection and equipment. Or, players looking for variety and flexibility will find ways to fill several archetypal roles, but at the cost of optimum performance within a single discipline. These four archetypes are used throughout the book, so you should become familiar with them.

## Blaster

The blaster is the “classic” mage we generally think about from films and fiction. There’s no dancing around what they do—blasters dish out damage (and lots of it) with spells instead of swords. The classic *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, *disintegration* and other spells that deal a double dose of damage are this mage’s mainstay. There are basically two types of blasters. Front-end blasting entails spells that generally require a “to hit” by the caster (such as *scorching ray*). Back-end blasting involves spells where the target needs to make a save to lessen or avoid damage (such as *fireball*).

## Controller

This formidable mage controls, weakens and impairs his opponents so the rest of the party has an easier time taking them down. Many of the controller’s spells require a saving throw or else something bad happens to the target—something really bad. *Confusion*, *sleep*, *hold monster*, *bestow curse* and other spells which impair an opponent’s abilities are the bread and butter of this archetype.

## Saboteur

The saboteur controls the very battlefield itself, finding ways to tilt encounters in favor of his party by manipu-

lating combat conditions, or impeding the progress of the enemy. One of the saboteur’s strengths is that many of the spells don’t require a saving throw since they don’t directly affect their targets, but the environment around them. Spells such as *obscuring mist*, *grease*, *wall of fire* and *web* are all part of the saboteur’s arsenal.

## Support Specialist

The ultimate buff mage, the support specialist helps mitigate damage done to the party and improves damage done by the party through his wide array of spells. Like the saboteur, few of the support specialists spells will be resisted, as they are beneficial to the party. Staples of the support specialist include *bull’s strength*, *heroism*, *displacement* and other spells which enhance the party’s abilities or provide protection.

### OK, Now What?

With the *PHB* and the *Wizard Strategy Guide*, you’ve got all the tools to create a powerful mage that will be the envy of your party. Put this information to good use, and you’ll have your GM crying for mercy as you tear through the adventures at a record pace. But be careful—*don’t let your GM get a hold of this book*, or you’re likely to face enemy spell casters just as powerful as you are!

## Chapter One

# Ability Scores

**A**bility selection is at the heart of good character design, and well-chosen abilities can mean the difference between a mediocre spellcaster and a spellcaster who is powerful, dangerous and fun to play. A warrior's abilities are far more straightforward than those of an arcane spellcaster, and the interplay of different statistics makes assigning abilities a real challenge. Obviously, the most important ability depends upon class—wizards need Intelligence, while sorcerers favor Charisma. But besides these two, other abilities such as Dexterity and Constitution also play important roles. This first chapter gives a brief overview of the abilities that will help you define exactly what kind of arcane spellcaster you're going to develop, and shows you which abilities to boost and which ones to ignore.

## Abilities and What They Do

### Strength

There aren't very many situations where a mage is going to need Strength, but when you do—jumping or climbing to escape from danger, engaging in a round or two of melee if the enemy gets too close—you don't necessarily want to have to deal with a penalty to your rolls. Decent Strength isn't vital, but if you have an average score to spare, you might consider using it. Wizards, who will be using Charisma as their dumping ground for low stats, should put their second lowest stat here, while sorcerers, who need a high Charisma, will probably want to use Strength as their dumping ground.

### Dexterity

Dexterity is another matter, however. It improves your AC and boosts a mage's normally low Reflex save. There aren't many spells that require a Reflex save, but they include some of the more popular damage-inflicters, such as *fireball* and *cone of cold*, so a good Dexterity score will help if you expect your mage to be facing combat with other mages, especially those of the damage-output variety. Even some no-saving throw spells such as *acid arrow* require a ranged touch attack, and in such cases, a high Dexterity will at least grant you

a slightly better chance of avoiding them. And don't forget that Dexterity increases *your* chances of hitting with ranged touch spells, so if you plan on casting a lot of those touch attack spells, put a decent stat here. Otherwise, put Constitution higher than Dexterity.

### Constitution

Though mages shouldn't be focusing on hit points too much, an extra point or two is never going to hurt. For the mage, however, Constitution's most important role is its bonus to Fortitude saves. Like Reflex, a mage's Fortitude save is pretty low, and some pretty nasty spells require a Fortitude save, as well as pesky poisons and diseases. Though the notion of a strapping, high-Constitution mage may be a little odd, the need to boost your Fortitude save outweighs other considerations. Make Constitution your second-highest score, unless you're a ranged combat specialization, in which case make Constitution third after Dexterity.

### Intelligence

Obviously, the importance of Intelligence to a wizard can't be understated. It provides you with bonus spells per day, grants additional skill points, sets the DC of your spells' saving throws and determines what level spells you can cast. This is most likely where a wizard's highest score is going to go, especially if you plan to have your wizard around for a while and want to eventually be able to cast high-level spells. Also keep in mind that those bonus spells will give you an edge over lesser wizards in battle. Later on we'll discuss the pros and cons of boosting your Intelligence above 18. If you're a sorcerer, however, it wouldn't hurt to have those extra skill points, but if you're unsure, put your higher scores in Dexterity and Constitution to improve your saving throws.

### Wisdom

As with all other classes, spellcasters are vulnerable to enchantment spells such as *charm person* and *suggestion*, as well as other nasty items such as *slow* and the

various *symbol* spells. Fortunately, mages' strong suit is their Will save, which gives them a leg up on those poor warriors and rogue-types, at least when it comes to resisting magical compulsion and other spells that require Will saves. It's likely that your GM is going to focus enchantment spells on targets with lower Will saves such as fighters anyway. While Wisdom is important, it doesn't beat out Constitution or Dexterity. Put a decent but not spectacular score here.

## Charisma

While all but useless for those who rely on swords and armor, Charisma is central to the sorcerer, just as Intelligence is to the wizard. If you're a sorcerer, apply the same advice we gave for Intelligence to Charisma, and put your high score here, and your low score in Strength. Wizards can dump their low score here, and put their next lowest in Strength, as discussed above.

## Putting It All Together

We've already discussed the mage archetypes and what role they play in party adventuring. Though the above guidelines will result in a well-rounded arcane spellcaster, you should also keep the archetypes and roles in mind when you're selecting stats; you might want to fine-tune them a little depending upon what you want to do with your new character. Below are the major arcane spellcasting archetypes and some ideas as to how to divide up your stats. We'll use the elite array discussed in the DMG—scores of 15, 14, 13, 12, 10 and 8 as our baseline, and provide suggestions as to how to maximize each archetype.

## Bonus Spells and Boosting Stats

Of course, no discussion of arcane spellcasters would be complete without touching on bonus spells. Honestly, every spellcaster should have at least a few—if your wizard doesn't get any, his Intelligence must be less than 12, which makes him a pretty feeble mage.

As we mentioned under Intelligence, bonus spells can mean the difference between victory and defeat, especially if you're facing other spellcasters. An extra *magic missile* or two, lobbed at just the right moment, can incapacitate or even kill a critical foe, while additional *summon monster* or enhancement spells such as *haste* can give your party the edge after an enemy has run out of spells. As you're going to be putting your highest score into your primary ability—Intelligence for wizards and Charisma for sorcerers—you're going to have a good stock of bonus spells. For the most part you'll probably be facing foes with lower statistics, so don't squander your bonuses. Use them wisely; keep that extra *fireball* or higher-level damage-causing spell in reserve, or have a spare *expeditious retreat* handy to help get yourself or your comrades out of a jam.

Eventually, you're going to have the opportunity to boost your primary ability. If you started with an 18 score, then you can be up to 20 by 8th level, with a +5 modifier and another 1st-level bonus spell. Should you put the points into Intelligence/Charisma, or boost one of the other stats listed above? In most if not all cases, the answer should be “yes, maximize my casting ability, please!” unless you're especially deficient in Dexterity or Constitution and need an extra point of AC or Fortitude save. Besides, that “20” on your character sheet looks pretty impressive, doesn't it?

## Blaster

Your blaster mage is going to specialize in doing lots of damage. His spells are going to include the classics such as *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile* and the like. He's the party's mobile artillery, and you're going to want to set his stats to reflect that. Conjunction and evocation spells are this mage's bread and butter, and he's going to want a nice high DC to saving throws, making a high primary ability even more important. If he's a wizard, put the high score in Intelligence and if he's a sorcerer, put it in Charisma. Sometimes he will be casting damage spells that require a ranged touch attack, so Dexterity is important. A damage output wizard is going to have stats that look like Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8. A sorcerer is going to have Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15.

## Control

The control mage wants to control the party's foes, making it easier for his non-magical allies to take them down. Most of this mage's spells—*confusion*, *sleep*, *hold person*, *web*, *color spray*, *charm person*, and all those other spells that fighters and archers know and hate—require saving throws (usually Will) and don't necessarily need ranged touch attacks, so Dexterity isn't as important, though it will come into play if he's going to be casting close-range spells. A control wizard will have Str 10, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8. A control sorcerer will be Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15.

## Sabotage

The saboteur is going to be throwing out a lot of spells that make the battlefield more difficult for the party's opponents. Most of

these—*obscuring mist, invisibility, grease, wall of fire, black tentacles*, and the like—affect natural objects and terrain rather than creatures, and don't allow saving throws, but that shouldn't dissuade you from still putting your top stat in your prime ability. He's not a combat mage, so he's going to want to stay out of the line of fire, and if he's casting shorter-range spells, needs to dart in, do his thing and get out before the enemy can focus on him; in such cases slightly higher Strength for the occasional Jump or Climb roll wouldn't hurt. He won't be attempting ranged touch attacks as often, so his Dexterity doesn't need to be as high, but an extra point of AC will help him survive if he has to get in close. Wizards will have Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8. A sorcerer should have Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15.

## Support

This caster is probably a warrior's best friend, providing help to the party and frustration to their enemies with spells such as *bull's strength, cat's grace, blur, heroism* and the like. He can also supplement the party's strength with summoned creatures. He'll usually stay back out of the main battle, so he doesn't need Dexterity as much as front-line types. Wizards will have Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8. A sorcerer should have Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15.

So, summing it all up, here are the six abilities, organized for wizards and sorcerers, in descending order of importance.

## Wizards

Ability	Notes
1: Intelligence	Wizard's prime stat; don't skimp here unless you're multiclassing. And even then, think long and hard about what you're doing.
2: Constitution*	Bonus hit points; extra protection in the event you're caught in melee. Boosts your notoriously low Fortitude save.
3: Dexterity*	Boosts AC and Reflex save; important for ranged touch attacks. Boost it if you're a ray specialist or expect to take missile fire. Also important for missile support if you've run out of spells.
4: Wisdom	Boosts Will save; important if you expect to defend against a lot of enchantment spells. Wizards already have a high Will save, however, so don't put too much emphasis on this score.
5: Strength	Minimal use for wizards; might help in melee or if you're multi-classing with a warrior class.
6: Charisma	No real use for wizards.

## Sorcerers

Ability	Notes
1: Charisma	Like Intelligence, only for sorcerers. Helps you smile pretty and cast more spells, so don't skimp.
2: Constitution*	Better Fortitude save, extra hit points.
3: Intelligence	Could get you a few extra skill points, which sorcerers get very few of.
4: Dexterity*	Improves Reflex and ranged attack scores.
5: Wisdom	See above. Keeps you safer from enchantment and other effects that require Will saves, but your Will save is high anyway.
6: Strength	You need an awfully good reason not to make this your dumping ground.

\*If you're going to specialize in rays, ranged touch attack spells or missile combat, reverse the order of Dexterity and Constitution.

# Chapter Two

# Races

**R**aces that make good mages aren't as common as good warriors, and that's to be expected. Swinging a sword isn't the same as mastering the mystical forces of magic, and is likely to be a lot more common. None of the standard character races receive bonuses to their spellcasting abilities, and several receive penalties. Here we'll go over the major player character races and determine which ones make the best arcane spellcasters, and also provide some suggestions for other possible races that you can present to your game master.

---

## Humans

The game's jacks-of-all-trades, humans have the advantage of adaptability and flexibility. They receive bonus skill points and feats, are good at multiclassing, and have other advantages that make them a good choice for a starting character. Many of a human's advantages, however, don't really apply to an arcane spellcaster. Though a human is always a good solid choice regardless of class, here are some things to keep in mind when you're making your decisions.

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### Skills and Feats

One significant human advantage is bonus skill points. However, many skills aren't of enormous use to a mage, and there are only a handful of skills that they're likely to use a lot—Decipher Script, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft and (most importantly) Concentration. Our 15 Intelligence wizard gets 16 skill points at first level and 4 per level thereafter, enough to max out his three favorite skills even without a human's bonus skill points. If he's a human, he gets 20 points to start and 5 per level thereafter, which he can put into other important skills, or buy expensive cross-class skills as discussed in the skills chapter. A human mage's skill bonuses may give a marginal advantage, but in some ways it's outweighed by other races' advantages.

A human's single bonus feat at first level is a better deal. Most mages' feats are single shot deals, meaning you don't have to worry too much about extended feat trees

like warriors do. The exceptions are Spell Penetration and Spell Focus, both of which can be quite advantageous when you're facing a spell-resistant enemy. A human's bonus feat can give him a head start on getting to Greater Spell Focus or Greater Spell Penetration, or might provide the all-important Point Blank Shot for ranged touch attack damage mages at first level. Metamagic feats don't really come into play until you get higher spell slots to prepare enhanced spells, so don't put your bonus feat into metamagic.

### Best Archetypes

A human will work well in any of the arcane archetypes, and the race's flexibility allows him to conceivably fill several different roles in a smaller party.

### Human Stat comparison

The ability prioritization at the end of Chapter One: Ability Scores is the format a human should apply to his stat array. Flip back a page or two and assign your stats as shown for a wizard or sorcerer to take your first step toward becoming a legendary human mage.

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## Dwarves

Dwarves are natural warriors, and when swinging an axe or sword they have few equals. The same can't be said for dwarven sorcerers, however, as their -2 penalty to Charisma imposes a major handicap. A dwarf makes a good wizard, however, with a +2 Constitution bonus that enhances Fortitude saves and helps make them more resilient in melee or against damage spells. Since you're probably going to be dumping a wizard's low stat in Charisma as well, be ready to play a pretty unappealing dwarf.

### Special Abilities

There are other benefits to playing a dwarven wizard. Darkvision makes them a far better ally when fighting

in darkness, their +2 save against magic makes them more likely to stand up against other spellcasters, and their +2 on Craft rolls can even come into play when they are creating magic items. Though traditionally dwarves are rarely thought of as more than armored fireplugs with axes, don't turn your nose up at a dwarf wizard. He might just surprise you.

## Favored Class

The big disadvantage to playing a dwarf wizard is if you plan on multiclassing. Since a dwarf's favored class is fighter, then it's most likely that your wizardly skills are going to share the stage with combat abilities.

## Best Archetypes

Dwarves tend to like things that make lots of noise, and as a rule enjoy inflicting damage, especially on orcs and goblins. Their innate toughness makes them a natural for the damage output archetype, since they can stand in the line of fire and keep lobbing damage considerably longer than those frail humans and dainty elves. A dwarf's inherent advantages don't come into play if they stay in the background like a support specialist; controllers and saboteurs are good middle-range choices, with neither significant advantages nor disadvantages.

**Dwarf Wizard Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	10	14	15	15	12	6
Controller	10	13	16	15	12	6
Saboteur	13	12	16	15	10	6
Support	12	13	16	15	10	6

## Elves

While elves are generally thought of as the quintessential wizard race, they don't actually get any ability bonuses that directly improve their spellcasting. The +2 Dexterity bonus means that they're good at lobbing ranged touch spells and helps them avoid the consequences of counter-magic by boosting their AC and enhancing Reflex saves. The -2 Constitution penalty isn't much fun, losing out on hit points and lowering the notoriously bad Fortitude save even further. However, this can be minimized if the elf is good at avoiding damage in the first place. In general, their magical bonuses come from their racial abilities, and their favored class allows elf wizards to multiclass without penalties.

## Special Abilities

The +2 bonus to Listen, Search and Spot shouldn't be discounted for a spellcasting elf, especially when coupled with an elf's natural low-light vision. In such standard adventuring conditions as dungeons, caverns, at night and in restricted areas, an elf's enhanced Spot could give your adventuring party the chance to get a volley of spells and missiles off before the enemy even knows you're there. Spot also allows the elf to avoid surprise, but these advantages become considerably less significant at higher levels.

Certainly, elves' immunity to *sleep* and their +2 bonus to saves against enchantment help frustrate foes at lower levels, though once more these advantages diminish in importance at higher levels. All the same, an elf wizard can risk facing enchantment spells with slightly less chance of succumbing than his human colleagues.

Though an elf's favored class is wizard, multiclassing is not as advantageous for mages as for other class combinations. Most other classes don't offer a mage that many advantages, save for a few extra hit points or skills, and to fully exploit combat abilities, a mage has to don armor and risk arcane spell failure. Though the elven favored class certainly suggests that they are natural wizards, you probably won't want to bring these advantages into play unless your specific campaign requires it.

## Archetypes

Elves' favored class is really the only advantage that they have as spellcasters over gnomes and halflings. Generally, an elf makes a decent enough wizard or sorcerer; their added Dexterity allows them to excel at targeted spells such as *acid arrow*, *meteor swarm* and *disintegrate*, while also granting bonuses to Reflex saves and AC. Low Constitutions often result in low hit points and an even worse Fortitude save, so your elven mage is going to want to stay out of the line of fire even more than other mages. Though they certainly can serve as damage output firing platforms, elven mages will be more at home as control or support archetypes. The saboteur is going to be exposed to the enemy periodically, and while an elf would be good in this role, he has to be careful not to expose himself to the enemy.

**Elf Wizard Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	10	15	12	15	12	8
Controller	10	15	12	15	12	8
Saboteur	13	14	12	15	10	8
Support	12	15	12	15	10	8

Elf Sorcerer Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	8	16	11	12	10	15
Controller	8	15	12	12	10	15
Saboteur	8	14	12	13	10	15
Support	8	15	12	12	10	15

## Elf Subraces

Several elf subraces make outstanding mages. Wood, wild and aquatic elves receive a -2 penalty to Intelligence, and would therefore make poor wizards, though they receive the usual range of elven benefits and would be suitable as sorcerers. Sorcerer is, in fact, the favored class for wild elves, and they still receive the elven +2 bonus to Dexterity.

*Gray Elf:* If your GM allows elven subraces, then the gray elf is the race of choice when playing wizards. The +2 bonus to Dexterity is replaced by a similar Intelligence bonus, and their Strength penalty is less of a handicap than the -2 Constitution penalty that ordinary elves receive. Even our elite array wizard will start with a 17 Intelligence if he's a gray elf, and the possibility of having such a stat in a beginning character is too good to ignore. And for this, you don't even have to worry about level adjustments.

Grey Elf Wizard Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	8	13	14	17	12	8
Controller	8	13	14	17	12	8
Saboteur	11	12	14	17	10	8
Support	10	13	14	17	10	8

*Dark Elf:* Admit it—you've always thought dark elves were cool, even if you were reluctant to admit it. The lure of playing these ebon-skinned devils grows nearly irresistible when you consider that a dark elf, with his +2 bonus to both Intelligence *and* Charisma, is an outstanding choice as either a wizard *or* a sorcerer. There's a catch, however—that pesky +2 level adjustment. But in exchange for those two levels, you get darkvision (more useful than regular elves' low-light vision, though it's balanced by light blindness), SR 11 + class levels, a +2 bonus to Will saves against spells (not just enchantment spells), and a nice collection of low-level spell-like abilities.

What would you have gotten if you'd taken a gray elf, for example? Ten more skill points and another 2d4 hit points; you'd be one level short of your second feat and two levels short of your third, and you'll be one step

behind the spell-learning curve (that gray elf will know 3rd-level spells while you're still dishing out 2nd-level spells). Overall, the benefits of darkvision, a better save than ordinary elves, spell resistance and those spell-like abilities seem to be very tempting compensation. So if your GM is flexible and allows such things, a dark elf is the way to go. Who cares if they're evil? They make kickass mages.

Dark Elf Wizard Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	10	13	14	17	12	10
Controller	10	13	14	17	12	10
Saboteur	13	12	14	17	10	10
Support	12	13	14	17	10	10

Dark Elf Sorcerer Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	8	14	13	14	10	17
Controller	8	13	14	14	10	17
Saboteur	8	12	14	15	10	17
Support	8	13	14	14	10	17

## Gnomes

Once the gnomish illusionist was a strange, if official, standard combination. Today, gnomes' favored class is the bard, but their advantages when serving as illusionists remain. Their stat adjustments—-2 Strength, +2 Constitution—don't affect their ability to cast spells, and they receive a number of racial special abilities that make them a good choice for spellcasters of all types, not just illusionists.

### Special Abilities

Gnomes receive a small but significant +1 bonus to the DC of any illusion spells they cast, a +2 to saves against illusions, and a collection of spell-like abilities if their Charisma score is over 10 (if you're playing a gnome wizard, you should make Strength your dumping ground instead of Charisma, so you don't lose those spell-like abilities). Though it doesn't directly affect spellcasting, gnomes are Small and get a Small bonus to their AC because of it, as well as the low-light vision that makes elves such a valuable ally in dark places.

### Favored Class

The gnomes' new favored class is the bard, which is more jack-of-all-trades than spellcaster. Gnomes excel

at this role, and make good generalist spellcasters, though they'll want to find and prepare as many illusion-type spells as they can to take advantage of their natural talents. And for spellcasters, bard may be a tempting class to multiclass with, as you'll retain some magical abilities and gain a number of useful abilities.

## Archetypes

The gnome is an excellent controller or saboteur, casting confusing and damaging illusions such as *color spray*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *invisibility*, *phantasmal killer* and the like. These spells either frustrate and damage the enemy or make the battlefield more favorable to the gnome mage's allies. Low Strength means that your gnomish mage is going to want to stay out of combat, and so will have to keep the armored beat-stick warriors between him and harm. Gnomes can take damage, so they don't necessarily have to shy away from front-line service as a damage output specialist, but as a rule they'll want to stay out of any major damage-causing situations.

Note in our examples that we're using Strength as dumping ground for both wizard and sorcerer so that our gnome can use his spell-like abilities.

**Gnome Wizard Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	6	13	16	15	12	10
Controller	6	13	16	15	12	10
Saboteur	6	12	16	15	10	13
Support	6	13	16	15	10	12

**Gnome Sorcerer Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	6	14	15	12	10	15
Controller	6	13	16	12	10	15
Saboteur	6	12	16	13	10	15
Support	6	13	16	12	10	15

## Half-Elves

Half-elves' receive *sleep* immunity and a +2 bonus against enchantment from their elven heritage, while from their human side they get... Well, nothing really. Though no stats are penalized, none receive any bonuses either. Like half-orcs, half-elves are more of a choice for those roleplaying types than for the true power gamer.

## Special Abilities

Minimal, though their low-light vision gives them some of the advantages already mentioned under elves, and they can stand up to low-level enchantment spells somewhat better than other races. Other than that, there's not much to recommend half-elves, especially at higher levels, when their initial benefits start to fade in importance.

## Favored Class

The only exception is their flexible choice in regard to favored class. If you want to multiclass, the half-elf might be a tempting choice over a human, though it ends up costing you your extra bonus feat and some skill points.

## Archetype

A half-elf can function well in most of the archetype roles, from damage output to support. His bonuses against enchantment spells and immunity to sleep mean that he can take a few more risks at the front lines or within range of enemy magic than some other races. In general, he's going to do best as a saboteur or controller, though he'll be a more than adequate support or damage output mage.

**Half-Elf Wizard Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	10	13	14	15	12	8
Controller	10	13	14	15	12	8
Saboteur	13	12	14	15	10	8
Support	12	13	14	15	10	8

**Half-Elf Sorcerer Stat Comparison**

Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	8	14	13	12	10	15
Controller	8	13	14	12	10	15
Saboteur	8	12	14	13	10	15
Support	8	13	14	12	10	15

## Half-Orcs

One really has to feel sorry for the half-orc saddled with an arcane spellcasting class. His -2 penalties to both Intelligence and Charisma make him a poor choice for a wizard or sorcerer, and his other benefits are pretty minimal. Sure, they get a +2 to Strength, but this is a wizard's dumping ground, and also of little use to a

sorcerer. If this were a book about challenging roleplaying opportunities and unorthodox characters that will attract a lot of attention, we'd probably go into playing half-orc mages a lot more thoroughly, but that's not what this book is all about.

Though they make good warriors, half-orcs simply don't pass muster as mages. Even if you max out on your primary stat with an 18, you'll be starting with a 16 Intelligence or Charisma—not shabby, but if you'd picked an elf or a human, you'd have the full 18. Generally, unless you've got a really good reason to play one (an all half-orc campaign, perhaps?), leave half-orc mages to the roleplayers.

## Special Abilities

What special abilities? They get darkvision like several other races, but beyond that half-orcs' primary advantage is in the realm of brute strength, a statistic that is of little significance to the average spell-slinger. The ability to see in the dark is pretty insignificant when you consider that you're giving up 2 points of both Intelligence and Charisma, both critical stats for mages.

## Archetypes

If you must play a half-orc mage—and you should know by now that we don't recommend it—you'll probably want to be a damage output type, as the half-orc's enhanced Strength will help should the enemy decide to rush the spellcaster, but if you keep putting your poor half-orc mage into harm's way, you will be rolling up a new character relatively soon. Otherwise, there really isn't much difference between roles—as a mage, the half-orc pretty much sucks in all of them. Check out the stat comparison if you have any doubts.

Half-Orc Wizard Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	12	13	14	13	12	6
Controller	12	13	14	13	12	6
Saboteur	15	12	14	13	10	6
Support	14	13	14	13	10	6

Half-Orc Sorcerer Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	10	14	13	10	10	13
Controller	10	13	14	10	10	13
Saboteur	10	12	14	11	10	13
Support	10	13	14	10	10	13

## Halflings

Small and hard to hit, halflings make great archers and slingers, and—surprisingly—can be quite effective mages. Their enhanced Dexterity means that those few but important spells that require ranged touch attacks will go home more effectively, and the -2 Strength doesn't really hurt a mage all that much (as we've been driving home for the entire chapter; get it yet?). Though if given the choice, a human or elf (make that a *gray* elf) is going to be your first choice as a mage, don't necessarily write off halflings.

## Special Abilities

With a bonus to AC, +1 to *all* saving throws, and a +2 bonus against fear effects, a halfling is pretty resilient and can withstand an opponent's spells better than most low-level races. Like other advantages, these get less significant later on in the game, but at lower levels, it puts halflings on a par with elves and dwarves when it comes to defending against hostile magic. Their +1 to all saving throws is actually quite competitive when compared to elves' +2 against enchantment—there are 38 enchantment spells, 30 of which allow saves (almost all Will), but there are also 38 spells that require a Fortitude save, 15 that require a Reflex save, and a whopping 139 non-enchantment spells that require a Will save. Would you rather have +2 against 30 spells or +1 against nearly 200? Do the math.

## Favored Class

Halflings' favored class of rogue is great for gaining skill points and miscellaneous abilities, but most of these aren't of much use to a wizard or sorcerer. As we've already said, you don't really want to multiclass your mage unless there's an overwhelming campaign-related reason to do so. That said, a rogue/wizard is a potential multiclass option discussed in detail in the multiclassing section of Chapter 3: Classes.

## Archetypes

Halflings are well suited to direct damage and sabotage—the halfling's small size and enhanced Dexterity and saving throws help him deliver targeted spells from close range while avoiding missile and magic counterfire. And for foes lobbing *fear* spells at their enemies, a halfling's bonuses to resisting such effects will make him even more useful near the battle front.

Halfling Wizard Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	8	15	14	15	12	8
Controller	8	15	14	15	12	8
Saboteur	11	14	14	15	10	8
Support	10	15	14	15	10	8

Halfling Sorcerer Stat Comparison						
Archetype	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
Blaster	6	16	13	12	10	15
Controller	6	15	14	12	10	15
Saboteur	6	14	14	13	10	15
Support	6	15	14	12	10	15

## Tallfellow Halflings

While there are several different halfling subraces, especially with the various campaign sourcebooks available, the tallfellow is the best optional subrace for mages. The differences between tallfellows and the standard halfling race presented in the PHB are minor.

Basically, tallfellow are elf-flavored halflings. They benefit from the elven search traits, getting racial bonuses to Spot, Search and Listen, as well as an automatic Search check when passing within 5 feet of a concealed or secret door. These heightened senses come at the cost of bonuses to Climb, Jump and Move Silently. As you'll soon find out in the skill chapter, that's an excellent tradeoff for the aspiring mage, as your physical skills aren't nearly as important as sensory skills—especially at higher levels.

Since tallfellow are still Small size and get the racial bonus to Dexterity, they represent a solid upgrade to the generic halfling. In all other regards, developing a Tallfellow halfling mage should be approached the same way as any other halfling, as outlined above.

There are some other races, however, that have some potential as player character mages. Most are saddled with level adjustments; the main question is whether they're worth it or not. Generally speaking, the additional powers and ability bonuses of creatures with high ECL adjustments do not outweigh the loss of caster levels and access to higher level spells.

A 3rd-level wizard with an ECL of +4, for example, will only have access to 2nd-level spells. Ignoring 0-level cantrip spells, he's likely only casting 5 spells per day (three 1st-level and two 2nd-level spells, taking into account a higher casting attribute to warrant bonus spells). Meanwhile a 7th-level gray elf wizard will already have access to 4th-level spells and be able to cast 13 or more spells per day (assuming five 1st-level, four 2nd-level, three 3rd-level and one or two 4th-level spells with a high enough base casting attribute).

That +4 ECL 3rd-level wizard will only have 2 feats to help augment his casting (general feats at 1st and 3rd level), while the 7th-level wizard has 4 feats (1st, 3rd and 6th-level general feats, bonus wizard feat at 5th-level). Not only does the 7th-level wizard have more feats, but the higher spell slots allow the use of metamagic feats to prepare an empowered *scorching ray* or maximized *magic missile* in a 4th-level slot.

In addition to having access to more overall spells, remember that higher level spells have an inherently higher saving throw base. A higher base casting ability can offset that somewhat, but the mage with a high ECL will simply run out of spells far quicker than a dedicated mage without the ECL penalty.

And regardless of your race, a mage without spells will very quickly become a mage without hit points.

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## Other Races

Many traditional races—goblins, orcs, trolls, lizard folk, centaurs—are warrior-types who receive penalties to Intelligence and/or Charisma, and get mostly combat-oriented special abilities. Some other creatures that might make good mages—half-dragons, liches and vampires, for example—are inherent or acquired templates, which your GM most likely wouldn't allow, unless it was under very special circumstances (rare), or if he was insane (possible, but unlikely).

# Chapter Three

# Skills

Everyone knows that a wizard needs Spellcraft skill. Otherwise, how would he learn new spells? Everything else is up for grabs. What skills are useful is a highly individual thing that will vary from game to game. However, since this is a guide to power gaming rather than a handbook for writing convoluted character backgrounds, it will approach skills from this point of view: "What helps you kill monsters, take their stuff, sell it, and get the most money and power while doing it?" If you decide that your mage wants multiple ranks of Climb because he is an avid amateur rock-climber, you can do that and it probably won't be the end of the world, but if you want to defeat your enemies, drive them before you, and hear the lamentations of their families—right before you *fireball* them—then you'd best avoid those Climb ranks.

## Skills to Avoid

### Skills to Avoid

Balance, Climb, Diplomacy, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Gather Information, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Intimidate, Move Silently, Perform, Profession, Ride, Search, Survival, Swim, Use Rope

**Balance:** If you must, 5 ranks allow you to retain your Dexterity bonus while balancing and is a good cut-off point.

**Climb:** You don't cultivate magical power in order to climb walls. Climbing is beneath a mage, and at cross-class costs, it's a bad deal too. For situations where you have to lower yourself to physical labor, haul out a knotted rope and climb that. Even a mage can generally make a DC 5 check while taking 10.

**Diplomacy:** Since it's not a class skill for either wizards or sorcerers, and provides no synergy bonuses, it's not

### Boosting The Party's Skills

It doesn't matter how well you spend your skill points. Sooner or later, you'll run into a situation where you or another party member have to succeed at a skill check and you don't have a very good chance to do so. Fortunately, you have some magic to help you. *Heroism* and *greater heroism* both add a morale bonus to skill checks for a matter of minutes (or possibly hours with *heroism*). And don't forget the second-level spells that increase each ability score (*cat's grace*, *owl's wisdom*). Use of these spells can make a difficult skill check easy and an impossible skill check doable.

worth spending skill points here. Sorcerers who want a small bonus to diplomacy can get a better deal by buying five ranks of Bluff and wizards can help make up for poor Charisma with 5 ranks of Knowledge (nobility and royalty).

**Disguise:** When a mage disguises himself, he uses magic. A mage-thief might make good use of the Disguise skill to make that magic even more effective, but buying cross-class ranks is a waste.

**Escape Artist:** A sorcerer or wizard will never be able to keep up with monsters' grapple checks buying this cross-class and you've got magic for sneaking through tight spaces. Concentrating to cast *dimension door* will save you from grapples. Escape Artist will not.

**Forgery:** A wizard has a decent chance of spotting a poor forgery with an untrained check and a few cross-class ranks won't make a difference if the forgery is very good. If you want to create a good forgery, hire a professional. If you want to verify a document's authenticity, hire NPC experts and listen to them.

**Gather Information:** The DCs for Gather Information are fixed and rather low (10 for major news items and 15–25 for obscure information). A sorcerer will be able to gather major news without any ranks and a wizard can get more effect by buying 5 ranks of Knowledge (local) than by spending skill points cross-class.

**Handle Animal:** At early levels, a riding dog trained for guarding is a cheap and highly effective combatant. However, mages should spend their time acquiring arcane power rather than playing Doctor Doolittle.

You can convince your wardog to guard you before you enter combat based on untrained skill checks—if you fail, try again until you succeed.

**Heal:** Leave this to the cleric. Spend 50 gold on a healer's kit if you're worried about being able to stabilize downed allies. However, a *potion of cure light wounds* is also 50 gp and will stabilize them every time.

**Hide:** Mages don't hide; they make themselves invisible.

**Intimidate:** Sorcerers will be able to intimidate low-level foes with just their Charisma bonus and a synergy bonus from 5 ranks in Bluff. Since the DC scales with the target's level, there is not much hope that cross-class ranks will enable even a sorcerer to intimidate mid or high-level foes. A *fireball* should be more demoralizing than your skill check. If you still have foes to intimidate after burning all your spells, you've got bigger problems.

**Move Silently:** Leave it to the rogue and the ranger.

**Perform:** Leave entertainment to the bards.

**Profession:** Your profession is adventurer. You kill things and take their treasure. For that, you need spells not skill ranks.

**Ride:** You can stay in the saddle well enough as long as you have a decent Dexterity and a military saddle. Since you won't be charging anyone with a lance, that ought to be enough.

**Search:** Since Search is not a class skill for either wizards or sorcerers and you can't find any trap with a DC higher than 20 without being a rogue, there's no point in buying ranks. An elf or tallfellow halfling might be able to justify cross-class ranks to increase his chance of spotting a secret door, but there are better places to put those skill points. If you're a mage/thief, however, don't stop until you have a total bonus of at least +24. If there's a trap you can't find when taking 10, you need more ranks in Search.

**Survival:** Let the ranger find food and tracks in the wild. You can hunt with *magic missiles* and travel with *teleport*.

**Swim:** If you need to swim, change yourself into something with a swim speed instead.

**Use Rope:** If you need to bind a foe, use masterwork manacles. They're cheap and even if you buy cross-class ranks, they're usually better than your Use Rope check would be. If you need to secure a grappling hook... well,

just cast a spell and levitate or fly up. You didn't learn to manipulate the powers of the universe just to throw grappling hooks like every other wannabe adventurer.

## One Point Wonders

There are some skills where just one point can be quite useful—either by allowing you to use the skill at all or by giving a significant advantage over an untrained skill check. These are the one point wonder skills. They're worth putting one point into but, in general, putting more than that generates rapidly diminishing returns for a mage.

### One Point Wonders

Appraise, Craft, Decipher Script, Disable Device, Jump, Open Lock, Sleight of Hand, Tumble, Use Magic Device

**Appraise:** One cross-classed rank is a good investment. It is an Intelligence-based skill with relatively low fixed DCs (12 for common items, 15-20+ for rare or exotic items), so one rank gives you a decent chance of success. You could even make do with a half-rank (which grants no bonus but makes the skill count as trained). Since successful untrained Appraise checks give the same result as failed trained Appraise checks, even one half-rank is a good investment. There's no sense risking your life in the dungeon only to be cheated by merchants because you don't know the value of your treasure.

### Breaking the Game: Fabricate Your Fortune

The *fabricate* spell allows wizards to craft 10 cubic feet of non-minerals or 1 cubic foot of minerals per round. A wizard with just enough ranks of Craft (armorsmithing) or Craft (weaponsmithing) to make DC 20 while taking 10 could turn out cartloads of masterwork weapons and armor in minutes. Similarly, a wizard with enough ranks of Craft (alchemy) to make DC 25 while taking 10 can craft thousands of gold pieces worth of alchemist's fire, sunrods, tanglefoot bags, and the like in just one casting. If one assumes that the density of alchemist's fire is twice that of water and each alchemist's fire weighs a pound, a 9th-level wizard could create a little more than 11,000 applications of alchemist's fire per casting. If he has to make the vials too, that might dip to 5,000—but that's still enough to make roughly 50-60,000 gp per casting. That is, until your GM declares that you flood the market. And even then, several thousand flasks of alchemist's fire would make great grapeshot for a catapult.

**Craft:** A rank or two of Craft (alchemy) is a good idea for a wizard. It's always nice to be able to investigate a shiny new metal your GM has put into your hands. Some masterwork tools and your Intelligence bonus should be enough to equip you for basic work. Maxing this skill and cranking out tanglefoot bags and thunderstones is for NPCs. Since your character can hack it as an adventurer, let those who can't do the rest. A sorcerer's Intelligence bonus generally isn't high enough for it to be worth buying any Craft ranks.

**Decipher Script:** Placing one skill point in Decipher Script gives a high-Intelligence wizard a decent chance of success. Placing 5 ranks almost guarantees success on simple writings (and gives a handy synergy bonus to Use Magic Device checks with scrolls). Taking more than 5 ranks is a waste. It doesn't get you much that a scroll of *comprehend languages* wouldn't get you. Using one or two skill ranks to save money on scrolls is a good idea.

**Disable Device:** One skill point will not grant you a bonus but will make the skill count as trained. This will enable a mage to do simple things like jam locks and, while it won't help against magical traps, a high-Intelligence wizard with some masterwork thieves' tools should usually be able to make the DC 10 check to aid the party rogue with disabling mechanical traps without much effort. If you're a mage-thief, however, don't stop until you can make a DC 34 check while taking 10. If there's a trap you can't reliably disarm, you don't have enough ranks in Disable Device.

**Jump:** Most physical skills can safely be left untrained but it's worth sinking one skill point into Jump for the half-rank and trained status. An untrained jumper will always land prone unless he beats the DC by 5—something that is very hard for mages with a low Strength to accomplish. 5 ranks would give you a synergy bonus to Tumble but that's only worth it if you multi-class to fighter or another class with Jump but not Tumble as a class skill. Otherwise, it's easier to increase your Tumble skill by buying Tumble ranks.

**Open Lock:** A single skill point will make this skill trained and, with masterwork thieves' tools and a decent Dexterity, you will stand a good chance of assisting the party rogue when he opens locks. With a full rank or two, you should be able to take 20 and open an average (DC 25) lock. However, you'll never be good enough to open an amazing (DC 40) lock so don't bother past the first couple of ranks. If you need to open a difficult lock, *knock*.

**Sleight of Hand:** This could be worth one skill point to make it count as trained since palming small objects is rather easy and could be used to hide material

components for your spells. One rank is a pretty small investment to be able to make the attempt, but don't sink many more ranks into it. Cross-class ranks will never be enough to defeat a well-trained Spot check and minimal ranks are sufficient to defeat lazy or incompetent guards.

**Tumble:** One cross-class rank of Tumble—or even a single skill point to render it trained—is well worth the investment. Sometimes you will have to provoke attacks of opportunity by moving. Even a 25% chance of avoiding the attack is a good return on such a small investment. If you have a Dexterity of 14 or higher, then a single rank buys you a 45% chance of avoiding the first attack of opportunity.

**Use Magic Device:** This is a very powerful skill and can be worth spending skill points cross-class if you have the Wisdom to read divine scrolls. Sorcerers have a big advantage over wizards in this skill since it is Charisma based, but wizards generally have more skill points to spend.

In general, the easiest items to activate are wands since the DC is always 20 and they don't require any ability score to activate. For characters with sufficient Wisdom and the synergy bonuses from Decipher Script and Spellcraft, however, low-level scrolls are the easiest items to activate.

With 3 cross-class ranks of Use Magic Device, 5 ranks of Decipher Script, and 5 ranks of Spellcraft, a 3rd-level wizard with an 11 Wisdom and a 10 Charisma would have a 35% chance of successfully casting a 1st-level cleric or druid spell from a scroll and a 20% chance to successfully use any divine wand or staff. If that wizard continued to max the skill, at 13th level, he would have 8 ranks of Use Magic Device and would have a 60% chance of successfully using a 1st-level divine scroll or a 45% chance of successfully using any wand or staff.

A 13th-level sorcerer with a 24 modified Charisma, 5 ranks of Spellcraft, and 8 ranks of Use Magic Device would have an 80% chance of success on the scroll and a 70% chance of success with any divine wand or staff. The sorcerer could increase that chance to 95% and 85% respectively by using a *circlet of persuasion*, but that option isn't generally open to a wizard who needs the headband slot for a *headband of intellect*. Surprisingly, the sorcerer could still have a decent chance (60% and 50% respectively) with just the *circlet of persuasion*, 5 ranks of Spellcraft, and a single rank of Use Magic Device. Even at those odds, the skill could come in handy.

A wizard could use the skill to create items he could not otherwise create as well. For instance, he could use

scrolls of *divine favor* to create a *stone of good luck*, even without the help of a cleric. A specialist wizard could use it to cast scrolls of spells from his banned schools.

You can get by without Use Magic Device. Most adventuring parties will have a cleric on hand or a rogue or bard with better Use Magic Device skills. However, when those are not available, a sorcerer may find even a single rank of Use Magic Device enables the use of *wands of cure light wounds* or other useful items. A wizard will generally have to buy multiple ranks to have a decent chance of success and as a general rule should either buy maximum cross-class ranks or not bother at all.

## Knowledge is Power

**Knowledge:** A wizard should buy at least one rank in most Knowledge skills. Between his Intelligence bonus and his familiar—familiars have all of their masters' skill ranks and can consequently make Knowledge checks—this should be a constant source of low-level knowledge—and knowledge is power.

### Knowledge and Monsters

Many people assume that Knowledge skills are not relevant to combat. Don't believe them. Knowledge skills are a way to get vital information out of the GM. If you're facing a huge and towering menace with bat wings, claws, and nigh-impenetrable scales, a DC 28 Knowledge (the planes) check can tell you that it's a pit fiend and that they're a kind of devil that is vulnerable only to weapons that are both good aligned and silver. The fighter will be happy when you pass on that information. If you can remember a few general traits as well, that can serve you in good stead. For instance, you might remember that devils are immune to fire but have no resistance to electricity and cast a maximized *chain lightning* instead of *meteor swarm*. If, on the other hand, you had discovered that you faced a balor, you could cut loose with the *meteor swarm*, knowing that the demon's resistance would absorb some of the blast but that electricity would be wasted.

Exactly how relevant knowledge skills are to combat will depend upon your individual GM. In a campaign where Knowledge (the planes) will tell you that balors are immune to electricity and wield vorpal swords, the skill is useful. In a campaign where it will tell you that this particular balor is named Wormwood, has fighter levels that indicate a more martial inclination than most other balors, and wields a +5 *anarchic intelligent bastard sword of wounding* named Entropy's Razor, they are invaluable.

### Knowledge Skills vs. Monsters

**Knowledge (arcana):** Magical beasts, dragons and constructs: CR 1–26

**Knowledge (dungeoneering):** Aberrations, oozes: CR 2–17

**Knowledge (local):** Humanoids: CR  $\frac{1}{4}$ +

**Knowledge (nature):** Animals, fey, giants, monstrous humanoids, plants: CR  $\frac{1}{10}$ –17

**Knowledge (religion):** Undead: CR  $\frac{1}{3}$ –18

**Knowledge (the planes):** Outsiders: CR 1–23

### Synergies

All of the Knowledge skills also grant a synergy bonus if you have 5 or more ranks. In most cases, this is an easier way to raise your skill than buying ranks in whatever skill gets the bonus. Five ranks of a knowledge skill cost 5 skill points and give a +2 synergy bonus. Five skill points cross-class would only buy a +2 bonus in whatever other skill is considered, without the benefit of the improved Knowledge skill.

**Knowledge (arcana):** The +2 circumstance bonus to Spellcraft checks can be quite useful for a wizard but it's even better for a sorcerer whose skill points are much more limited. Knowledge about constructs, dragons and magical beasts' abilities and vulnerabilities is quite significant. Buy at least 5 ranks and more won't hurt—constructs and magical beasts have a variety of peculiar immunities and vulnerabilities and are encountered in a wide range of environments and challenge ratings.

**Knowledge (architecture and engineering):** The +2 bonus to Search checks to find hidden doors and secret compartments is potentially useful for elves and tallfellow halflings who get automatic Search checks when they pass hidden doors. For other characters, it's not too useful. Spend 5 points if you're an elf or tallfellow halfling. Otherwise, spend one or don't bother.

**Knowledge (dungeoneering):** +2 to Survival checks underground isn't helpful but knowing about aberrations and oozes can be. Any number of ranks is acceptable

**Knowledge (geography):** This can be useful for finding your location after a teleport mishap or for identifying the location of an enemy you are scrying, but the +2 to Survival checks is useless. Take one point, then leave it to the rangers.

**Knowledge (history):** A +2 bonus to bardic lore doesn't help mages at all. Take one point and leave the rest to the bards.

**Knowledge (local):** The +2 bonus to Gather Information can be useful and Knowledge (local) will help you to identify humanoids in battle. In many campaigns, this skill is worth one point, maybe 5, but not much more since humanoids tend to have low racial hit dice and few special abilities or resistances. If your GM allows Knowledge skills to grant information about specific individual enemies as well as simply the general type or race of enemy, this skill becomes much more useful. If your GM will let a successful Knowledge (local) check discern a humanoid foe's class levels and preferred tactics, it is easily worth maximizing.

**Knowledge (nature):** The +2 bonus on Survival checks in natural environments isn't too impressive, but getting the GM to tell you the nature and vulnerabilities of animals, fey, giants, monstrous humanoids, and plants is useful. It is definitely worth one rank and more won't hurt.

**Knowledge (nobility and royalty):** You could afford to ignore this, but buying five ranks is a better way to raise your Diplomacy bonus than buying Diplomacy ranks cross-class. Ignore it or buy 5 ranks if you want the synergy bonus.

**Knowledge (religion):** The +2 bonus to turn checks won't help you in the slightest, but knowing about gods and, more importantly, about the abilities and weaknesses of undead can be very useful. Buy at least one rank and buying more won't hurt you.

**Knowledge (the planes):** The bonus to Survival checks on other planes is useless, but being able to tell your party members whether they should be fishing for cold iron weapons (demons), silvered weapons (devils), or aligning their weapons to lawful to overcome damage reduction is tremendously helpful. So is finding out which outsiders are resistant to which spells. Since outsiders tend to have more immunities and resistances than other monster types, this is one of the most useful Knowledge skills.

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## The More, the Better

These skills are often worth max ranks. Some of them are good at less than maximum ranks as well, but all of them are useful.

### Skills that are nearly always worth more ranks

Bluff (sorcerer only), Concentration, Listen, Sense Motive, Speak Language, Spellcraft, Spot

**Bluff:** As the only face skill available to sorcerers as a class skill, Bluff is potentially worth placing max

ranks in. While a sorcerer will not get much use out of the combat feint application, it could be used quite effectively to make charmed creatures more biddable or to evade the restrictions of *dominate* spells. ("Yeah, it's a healing potion, honest; would I lie to you?") If you decide to settle for fewer ranks, 5 ranks provide three synergy bonuses and makes a good stopping point.

**Concentration:** This is an essential skill for any wizard or sorcerer and you should keep this skill as high as possible. There's nothing worse than fumbling that essential *black tentacles* spell because the enemy archer pegged you with an arrow as you started to cast or failing to successfully *dimension door* out of a behir's maw. Even if you don't plan to get near melee, you still need to max this skill. Mages live and die by their Concentration scores. Or at least, they die by failing Concentration checks.

Even after you have enough Concentration to successfully cast your highest level spell on the defensive, even if you roll a 1, you still want to keep putting ranks in Concentration. Casting *dimension door* to get out of a grapple requires a DC 24 Concentration check and you're unlikely to get a second chance to cast it before being pinned or swallowed. Just as significantly, the damage from enemies who ready actions to interrupt your spellcasting will continue to scale. A 15th-level fighter might well hit you for 20 points of damage, forcing a DC 30 + spell level Concentration check. If you can still succeed, you'll be in much better shape than if you can't.

**Listen:** Since this skill is often used to detect unseen foes and to determine surprise, it's worth buying max ranks cross-class if you can afford it.

**Sense Motive:** This is a good skill for any intrigue-focused game, even cross-class. You won't often be able to beat a skilled liar's Bluff check, but the hunch (DC 20) and sense enchantment (DC 15 or 25) abilities are very useful. A hunch that your guide may not be trustworthy can put you on your toes to look for an ambush. The ability to sense charms or enchantments will enable you to know when to cast *magic circle* or *dispel magic*. Even if your game is about killing monsters and taking their stuff, you may find that Sense Motive ranks provide a good protection against rogues gaining sneak attacks on you with the combat feint maneuver. If you max your ranks cross-class, you should be able to keep up with a rogue who maxes his Bluff skill. As an added bonus, 5 ranks grant a synergy bonus to Diplomacy.

**Speak Language:** This is essential for any summoning focused wizard or sorcerer. A creature will fight for any spellcaster, but if you speak its language as well, you can give it more precise direction and ask it to use its spell-like abilities. An avoral guardinal could be asked

to examine a suspicious item with *true seeing* or to heal a wounded comrade. A celestial elephant could be directed to trample over the main villain's minions rather than engage the main villain with its normal attacks. Similarly, a hound archon could be instructed to cast *aid* on all of your companions and then to shield them with its *magic circle against evil* rather than simply hurling itself into the fray.

**Spellcraft:** This skill is essential for wizards but less so for sorcerers. Many sorcerers can get by with a single rank of Spellcraft—enough to let them attempt to determine the school of a magical aura with *detect magic*. For wizards, the most important DC is the 15 + spell level check required to scribe a spell into the wizard's spellbook. A wizard should always have enough Spellcraft skill to take 10 on this check and automatically succeed. Fortunately, that's not difficult. A 2nd wizard with a 15 Intelligence, 5 ranks of Spellcraft and 5 ranks of Knowledge (arcana) will already have a +9 bonus to Spellcraft—enough to scribe 4th-level spells into his spellbook while taking 10. By 12th level, if he puts all his stat bumps into Intelligence and buys a *headband of intellect* +4, he will have a +13 bonus to Spellcraft without buying any more ranks. So, as important as Spellcraft is to wizards, they don't *need* many ranks.

Wizards often find more ranks of Spellcraft useful, however. The DC to identify a spell being cast in combat is also 15 + spell level, but since you can't take 10 in combat, a wizard with minimal Spellcraft will fail roughly half the time. That may not make any difference when you see a *fireball* coming towards you, but you don't want to try casting *hold person* on an enemy fighter right after the enemy cleric cast *freedom of movement* on him. It is also relevant if you ever want to counterspell a foe.

There are other significant DCs as well. The DC to identify a spell that is in effect, decipher a scroll without casting *read magic*, or identify materials made or shaped by magic is 20 + spell level. That's not particularly important because *read magic* is easy to prepare and cast, but if you run into a scroll in the middle of the adventure, it can be handy to be able to use it right away. The DC to identify a spell cast at you after making a saving throw is 25 + spell level. This can be a good way to gauge the ability of your opponents and it can also tell you whether you just saved against a *scrying* spell and have an enemy you might not know about or whether you saved against *hold monster* and have an unseen opponent nearby.

The DC to identify a potion is a flat 25. After a long trek through a dungeon, you don't want to pay 100 gp to cast *identify* on a 50 gp potion. Consequently, you'll either want to do this yourself or pay an NPC to identify your

potions using Spellcraft. There's nothing wrong with paying the NPC to identify your potions, but, if you can identify them yourself, you can actually use them during an adventure. That is a significant advantage of high Spellcraft skills. If you're down to single digit hit points, you don't want to be guessing which captured potion is the potion of *cure moderate wounds*. Even if you don't start drinking your treasure before the adventure is over, it's good to save money by identifying potions yourself.

A DC 30 Spellcraft check is required to understand strange or unique magical effects "such as the effects of a magic stream." It doesn't take much imagination to realize how useful it is to know whether bathing in a glowing magic pool will make one stronger and smarter or whether it will get you possessed by a demon instead.

A wizard can get by on as few as 5 ranks of Spellcraft for his entire career. That's fine for multi-class mages, sorcerers, and other dabblers. However, the higher DC functions of the Spellcraft skill are very useful so a real wizard should max it out.

**Spot:** Spot is a skill that keeps you from being surprised. Buying cross-class ranks is a good investment as long as you also buy magic items like the *eyes of the eagle* to support your ranks. There is no good stopping point for Spot—buy max ranks cross-class or don't bother at all. With *eyes of the eagle* and your familiar nearby, you'll have a chance to avoid surprise every now and then. Even more significantly, if you have *see invisibility* active, you'll have a chance to spot the clever rogues who make themselves invisible and still hide, just in case you have the spell active. Less than maximum cross-class ranks are unlikely to be helpful however, so either buy max ranks or don't bother with any.

# Chapter Four

# Feats

One of the biggest differences between any two given mages will be their feats. Even a wizard's specialty will not define him as well as his feats. For instance, one diviner might well have Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus (necromancy) while another diviner focuses on item creation and summoned monsters for combat. Moreover, few things can permanently cripple a character like poor feat choice. A few misplaced skill points won't have nearly the same impact as a few misspent feats. On the other hand, well spent feats can take a mage from being merely effective to devastating.

There are a number of factors that affect a feat's usefulness. Some will vary from campaign to campaign. For instance, Still Spell and Silent Spell are much more useful in an intrigue-focused game than in a combat-heavy one. The strategies and spells you wish your character to pursue are a more important factor. Trying to be a subtle and manipulative controller with your feats sunk into Spell Focus (evocation) and Empower Spell is playing to your weaknesses rather than to your strengths. Instead, use your feats to create strengths and play to them.

There is one other factor to consider: wizards and sorcerers assign feats significantly different value because of their different abilities. Aside from a few feats that are useless to sorcerers—like Quicken Spell—item creation feats are significantly less useful to sorcerers. While a wizard can learn a spell only to use it for item creation, a sorcerer's limited selection of spells ensures that a sorcerer cannot craft nearly the variety of items that a wizard can. On the other hand, metamagic feats effectively increase the number of spells that either a sorcerer or wizard knows. While this is valuable for a wizard because it creates spells that otherwise wouldn't exist, it is doubly valuable for a sorcerer who does not have the option of learning three or four spells that are more or less variations on the same theme.

## Feat Chains

Mages don't need to worry about feat chains very much. Among the mage-oriented feats, there are very few feat

chains and most of them are short enough that they don't really deserve the name. There are three basic feat chains—Point Blank Shot, Spell Focus and Spell Penetration. A fourth "sub" chain deals specifically with Spell Focus (conjunction), and getting the most out of your summoned servants.

### Mage Feat Chains

Point Blank Shot	Precise Shot	Improved Precise Shot (optional)
Spell Focus	Greater Spell Focus	
Spell Penetration	Greater Spell Penetration	
Spell Focus (conjunction)	Augment Summoning	

That's it. Unlike a warrior, a mage generally doesn't need to worry much about picking five different prerequisites in order to get one feat.

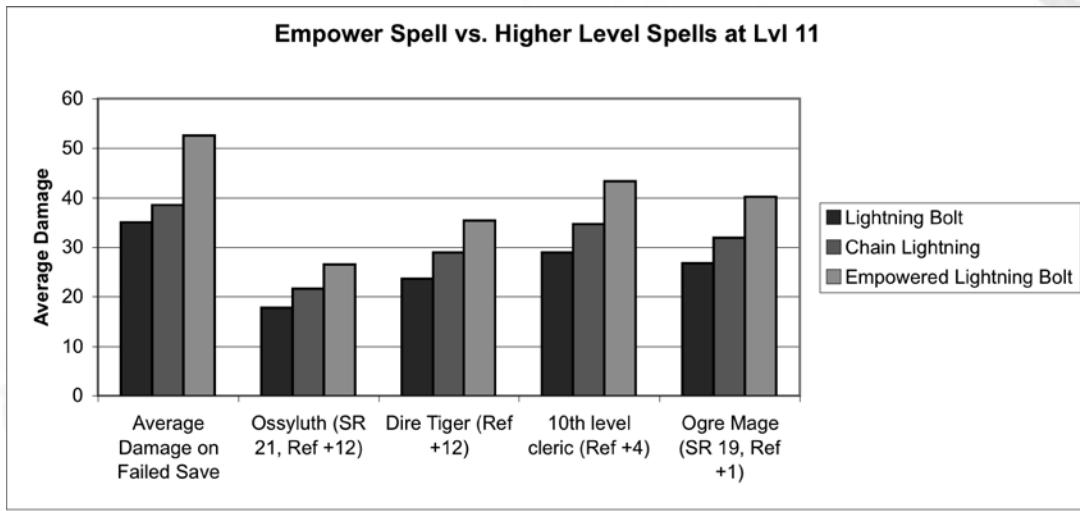
## Metamagic Feats

While there aren't many feat chains to explore, the number of metamagic feats available, and their impact on a mage's spellcasting options, creates a problem unique to mages. While a warrior may need to take several related combat feats to "pull off" certain combat maneuvers or tricks, the right metamagic feat can have a significant impact when used properly.

### Empower Spell

Empower Spell is one of the most useful ways to increase your mage's damage output. Without Empower Spell, about the only ways to break past the 1d6 damage per caster level are *disintegrate*—which is severely handicapped with a successful saving throw inflicting less than one quarter damage—and *scorching ray*—which only exceeds that cap by one die, and then only at levels, 3, 7, and 11. If you want to deal damage that will strike fear into the hearts of your foes, you need to use metamagic like Empower Spell to do so.

Empower Spell has some competition in this department. For 3 levels, Maximize Spell will eliminate the



need to roll dice and automatically deal maximum damage. Empower Spell is by far the better choice, however. While it does not increase damage by quite as much as Maximize Spell, it requires a smaller increase in spell level. At low levels, this enables Empower Spell

to be useful where Maximize Spell isn't. An Empowered *burning hands* or *shocking grasp* is a good use of a 3rd-level spell slot at 5th level. By 7th level, they are not a good use of a third-level spell slot, much less being maximized in a 4th-level slot. Empowered *scorching*

Spell	Empower vs. Maximize Spell: Average Damage by Caster Level on a Failed Save														
	Caster Level														
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Empowered Burning Hands	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25
Empowered Shocking Grasp	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25
Empowered Magic Missile	15	15	20	20	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Empowered Scorching Ray			42	42	42	42	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
Empowered Fireball				47.3	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5
Empowered Vampiric Touch				21	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25
Empowered Cone of Cold							68.25	73.5	78.75	78.75	78.75	78.75	78.75	78.75	78.75
Empowered Chain Lightning									78.75	84	89.25	94.5	99.75	105	
Empowered secondary arcs									39.38	42	44.625	47.25	49.875	52.5	
Empowered Disintegrate									157.5	168	178.5	189	199.5	210	
Empowered Delayed Blast											89.25	94.5	99.75	105	
Fireball															
Maximized Burning Hands			30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Maximized Shocking Grasp			30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Maximized Magic Missile			20	20	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Maximized Scorching Ray				48	48	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72
Maximized Fireball					60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Maximized Vampiric Touch					30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Maximized Cone of Cold									90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Maximized Chain Lightning											102	108	114	120	
Maximized secondary arcs											51	54	57	60	
Maximized Disintegrate											204	216	228	240	
Empowered and Maximized Scorching Ray									165	165	165	165	165	165	165

*ray* is available at 7th level, but a maximized *scorching ray* isn't available until 9th level.

At very high levels, maximized *cones of cold* and *chain lightnings* deal more damage than the average possible from an empowered spell but that is somewhat misleading because *delayed blast fireball* has an area that is much easier to control than *cone of cold* and, unlike *chain lightning*, deals full damage to all of its targets.

Empower Spell is also more widely useful than Maximize Spell. Because Empower Spell multiplies the die modifiers as well as the dice (for instance, an empowered *magic missile* inflicts  $1.5(1d4+1)$  per missile), Empower is actually better on spells with large modifiers. The average damage of an empowered *magic missile* is identical to the average damage of a maximized *magic missile*. The average penalty inflicted by an empowered caster level 10 *ray of enfeeblement* (12.5) is higher than the penalty inflicted by a maximized caster level 10 *ray of enfeeblement* (11 points). Similarly, an empowered caster level 10 *false life* grants more temporary hit points on average (23) than a maximized *false life* (20).

Empower Spell, like all metamagic feats, is more effective when applied to front end damage like *scorching ray* than to back end damage like *fireball*. An empowered and maximized *scorching ray* is no easier to dodge than *disintegrate* or *polar ray*. On the other hand, an empowered *fireball* will have a lower save DC than *cone of cold*.

Recommended spells: *burning hands*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shocking grasp*, *false life*, *scorching ray*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*, *enervation*, *fire shield*, *cone of cold*, *chain lightning*, *delayed blast fireball*.

## Enlarge Spell

Doubling the range of a spell at the cost of one caster level is generally a poor tradeoff. A sorcerer with a focus on close range ranged touch spells like *ray of enfeeblement* and *scorching ray* might occasionally make effective use of this feat, but there are generally much better things to do with a feat.

The one exception to this is battlefield magic. On an open battlefield, range is a very important consideration and being able to put a *wall of fire* in front of a thousand enemy archers when you're in their third or fourth range increment is much better than being able to do it when you're in their first or second range increment. If you regularly fight on battlefields that are larger than two to three hundred feet, Enlarge Spell will be very useful.

## Extend Spell

The chief use of this feat is to make hour/level duration spells last all day. At higher levels, it can also be used to turn 10 min/level duration spells into effectively all day spells. There are several handy tricks you can employ when using Extend Spell.

*Using Extend Spell to leverage your spell slots:* A sorcerer who has unused slots at the end of the day can spend a portion of those unused slots on extended long-duration buff spells and effectively get free buffs on the next day. For instance, an 8th-level sorcerer with *mage armor* and *greater magic weapon* as known spells could spend two 4th-level slots on extended *greater magic weapon* and four 2nd-level slots on extended *mage armor*, giving the party *mage armor* and +2 weapons for the next sixteen hours without any cost in spell slots. Wizards can duplicate some of this ability by leaving slots open during the day and casting long-duration spells if there is no cause to fill those open slots. For instance, a 12th-level wizard might leave a third and two fourth level slots open and, on any day when he has not needed to use those slots, prepare an extended *false life* and two extended *greater magic weapon* spells in those slots. In that way, he can have *false life* and his party can have *greater magic weapon* for all of the next day and the wizard will still have all of his spells available.

*Super leverage for wizards:* A wizard can leverage his level 5+ open spell slots for two days in advance by casting an extended *mnemonic enhancer* at the end of the day and preparing extra low-level spells that will last two days if not used.

*Synergy:* An empowered, extended *false life* is a very good way to spend an unused 5th-level slot at the end of the day.

Recommended spells: *alarm*, *charm person*, *floating disk*, *endure elements*, *mage armor*, *unseen servant*, *darkvision*, *false life*, *misdirection*, *obscure object*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*, *daylight*, *flame arrow*, *greater magic weapon*, *heroism*, *keen edge*, *magic circle vs. evil*, *nondetection*, *phantom steed*, *suggestion*, *tongues*, *charm monster*, *detect scrying*, *mnemonic enhancer*, *stoneskin*, *dominate person*, *false vision*, *overland flight*, *telepathic bond*, *contingency*, *geas/quest*, *mage's private sanctum*, *power word: blind*, *mind blank*, *moment of prescience*, *power word: stun*.

## Heighten Spell

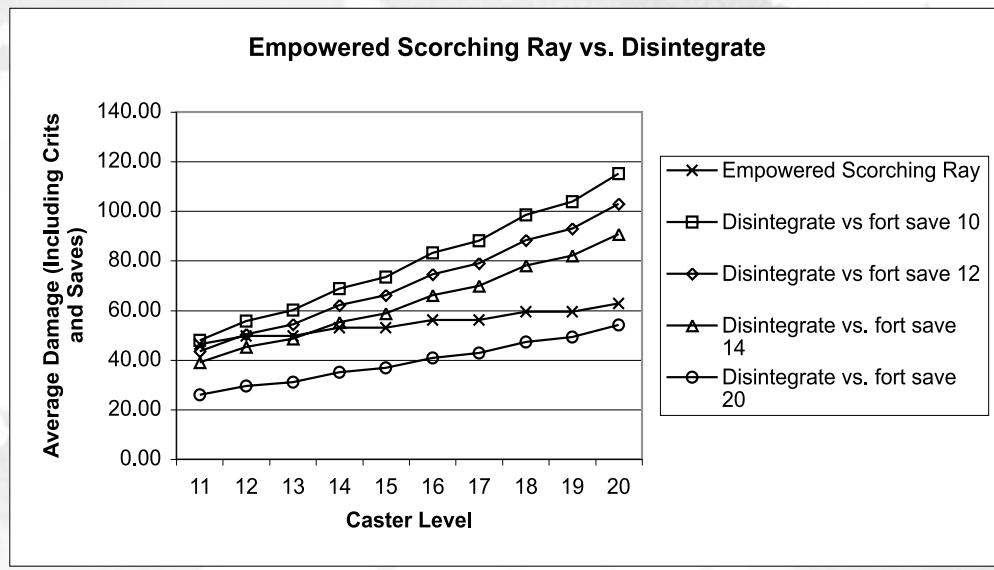
Heighten Spell is primarily useful for sorcerers who can use it to help their low-level spells retain useful DCs at high levels. A DC 16 *charm person* is not particularly

impressive at 10th level, but a DC 21 *charm person* might be worth the 5th-level slot. Wizards, who can afford to learn higher level versions of the same spell, should avoid this feat. A 10th-level wizard in the same situation should just cast *charm monster* and be done with it.

## Maximize Spell

Maximize Spell is Empower Spell's more expensive but less useful cousin. It can be used to gain a slight increase in damage compared to Empower Spell with high level damage spells. For example, the most instant area effect damage you can get out of a 6th-level slot is 60 points with a maximized *fireball*. In the 9th-level slot, however, an empowered *delayed blast fireball* deals more damage than a maximized *chain lightning* to all but the maximized *chain lightning*'s primary target. At lower levels, Empower Spell is significantly better. An empowered *magic missile* deals the same average damage as a maximized *magic missile*, but consumes a third-level spell slot rather than a fourth-level spell slot.

Maximize Spell's primary use is stacking with Empower Spell to make optimal use of a few select spells. A maximized and empowered *scorching ray*, for instance, does an average of 93 points of damage. Against foes with high Fortitude saves, that's a lot more damage than an empowered *disintegrate*—and one level lower.



Before you mention that the metamagically augmented versions of these spells aren't possible before caster level 13 (and yet we're using caster level 11 on the chart), consider that both an empowered *disintegrate* and an empowered, maximized *scorching ray* are possible at level 11 with a standard metamagic *rod of empowerment*. Chapter Seven: Equipment, shows you why it's such a great value, while this chart shows you how it kicks some serious butt.

Similarly, a maximized and empowered *ray of enfeeblement* will give an average penalty of 15 points to your opponents' Strength—enough to give your average troll a Strength penalty, or possibly reduce an enemy spellcaster to Strength 0 and take him out of the picture with a single no-save spell. Maximize Spell works well with Empower Spell but if you have to choose between them, pick Empower Spell.

Recommended spells: *scorching ray*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *enervation*, *cone of cold*, *chain lightning*

## Quicken Spell

High level wizards will rarely cast all of their spells every day. They will, however, often face situations where their empowered *fireball* leaves an enemy just barely standing and any means of dealing a little bit of extra damage would topple him over. Or perhaps a rampaging enemy fighter can be brought to his knees by a total of 8-17 points of Strength loss by combining *ray of exhaustion* with a quickened *ray of enfeeblement*. At high levels, wizards tend to have more spells than combat actions and Quicken Spell is the only way to equalize that equation.

**Synergy:** The fastest way to pump out any kind of damage is to cast an empowered or maximized spell and follow it up with a quickened spell. For instance, following an empowered and maximized *scorching ray* with a quickened empowered *scorching ray* yields an average of 156 points of fire damage in just one action (63 from the quickened/empowered version, 93 from maximized/empowered).

Similarly, following a maximized, empowered *enervation* with a quickened *enervation* will deliver an average of 7.5 negative levels to the target. At high levels, a quickened *enervation* can help reduce an enemy's saves before targeting that foe with a save or die spell.

Recommended spells: *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *fireball*, *haste*, *ray of exhaustion*, *dimension door*, *enervation*, *greater invisibility*, *solid fog*, *wall of force*, *waves of fatigue*

## Silent Spell

Silent Spell has two uses: It enables spellcasting when silenced or pinned and it enables a wizard to cast spells without being noticed. A wizard can escape from a pin with a silent *dimension door* and a mage-thief sneaking into the royal treasury probably doesn't want to alert every guard in earshot with the verbal component of a *knock* spell.

**Synergy:** Along with Still Spell, Silent Spell will allow stilled, silent spells to be used in social situations with significantly less chance of detection.

## Still Spell

Still Spell has three uses: It allows you to use a spell while grappled, it eliminates the arcane spell failure from any spell, and it makes it easier to disguise a spell when casting it. A stilled *blink* is often a better anti-grapple spell than *dimension door* and is certainly useful for a warrior-mage.

**Synergy:** Combine Still Spell and Silent Spell. A stilled, silent *suggestion* or *charm person* can open a lot of doors where *fireballs* and *magic missiles* aren't an option.

## Widen Spell

Unless your campaign regularly features large set battles with hordes of extremely weak foes, there will be very few times that a larger *fireball* will be better than a more intense one. In fact, this feat is best used with sabotage spells like *black tentacles*, *solid fog*, and *acid fog*, rather than damaging spells like *fireball*. Even then, however, it's not much use. Steer clear of this feat unless your campaign regularly features massive battles with numerous combatants.

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## Crafting Feats

The obvious question to ask about crafting feats is this: "Why am I giving up my XP? Is it worth it?" The answer will depend somewhat on your campaign. To a certain degree the value of crafting feats—especially their value relative to each other—is clear from the rules.

Crafting items only works when your GM allows the party some down time and access to merchants and craftsmen. If your party is constantly on the run from marauding orcs and never sleeps in the same place twice or the entire campaign is to be spent tracking

down the nefarious assassin's guild who will get away if your pursuit lags for even a minute, then you won't get much use out of the crafting feats. Crafting items takes time. It also requires that you be able to buy the materials you need in order to craft items. Crafting a magic sword will be hard if you can't buy a masterwork one to put the magic into.

What you get from crafting is two-fold. First, you get access to a vast array of equipment that might not normally be available to you. Many GMs will not simply give out blanket access to any item in the DMG just because you're in a metropolis and, in some campaigns, you may go five levels without setting foot in a settlement larger than a small town. By even the DMG rules, you won't find a *headband of intellect +6* there. If you can make it yourself, however, all you need is time, experience, a feat, and the ability to buy the 18,000 gp worth of ingredients. Second, Craft Wondrous Item and Craft Magic Arms and Armor give you the ability to upgrade your existing equipment rather than buying new items. A wizard with a *headband of intellect +2* can sell it to buy a *headband of intellect +4*, but will usually lose 2,000 gp selling the weaker headband. A wizard who uses a craft feat to upgrade the headband, however, doesn't have to sell the first one at a loss.

Now, some GMs will sometimes let you find NPCs who are willing and able to upgrade your items for a fee, but if you can do it yourself, it's guaranteed. Item creation feats also let you have far more equipment than you could otherwise afford. A 9th-level wizard could not ordinarily afford a *headband of intellect +6*. A 9th-level wizard with Craft Wondrous Item can comfortably afford one—and a *cloak of resistance +3*, and 11,000 gp or so in other items. Finally, you can actually gain more equipment through crafting than the simple catch phrase "half-price magic items" would indicate. If you craft items for other PCs at a discount (but not at your cost; you're losing XP and you should get something for that) you will gain more money or favors that can be used to equip yourself or fill out your spellbook. If your GM is amenable, you might even craft some items for friendly NPCs and gain influence along with a tidy profit. So, that's what you get from an item creation feat: access, upgrade potential, savings, and profit.

Exactly how much do you save with an item creation feat? Ignoring the question of profit, which will vary wildly from campaign to campaign, you save exactly 50% on every item you create. This won't really double your equipment budget since you won't craft everything you use yourself—time pressure, treasure, and items you don't have the feats to create will make a difference. However, if you pick versatile item creation feats, it could easily add up very quickly.

All of that benefit comes at a cost, however. When you create items, you lose experience, and even though your allies aren't adventuring in the meantime (if they were, it would effectively make you an NPC since you wouldn't be playing), they aren't losing experience so they will pull ahead. How much of a difference will that make? The answer is not too much. The chart below assumes that you spend 25% of all the gold you gain in your career crafting items. At that rate, it will take more than twenty levels to fall a full level behind your companions. So, at worst (and at the highest levels) you could expect to be making your levels when your companions are halfway towards making the next higher level. In that time, it's likely that you'll have saved enough gold to buy a *tome of clear thought* +5 and a *ring of protection* +5. The cost is substantial, but so are the benefits.

Level	DMG GP/Level	GP Saved	XP Lost
2	900	225	18
3	2700	675	54
4	5400	1350	108
5	9000	2250	180
6	13000	3250	260
7	19000	4750	380
8	27000	6750	540
9	36000	9000	720
10	49000	12250	980
11	66000	16500	1320
12	88000	22000	1760
13	110000	27500	2200
14	150000	37500	3000
15	200000	50000	4000
16	260000	65000	5200
17	340000	85000	6800
18	440000	110000	8800
19	580000	145000	11600
20	760000	190000	15200

## Brew Potion

Potions cost twice as much as scrolls and are restricted to 3rd level and lower spells. So, what advantages do they have? Primarily, their advantage is that they always take a standard action to drink and they can be used by anyone. This is a substantial advantage for potions of *enlarge person* that can take effect in the first round of combat rather than on your initiative in the round after you start casting. However, there's not much else to be said for a wizard brewing potions. A potion of *magic armor* costs twice as much as a scroll and you're going

to be able to cast it before combat anyway. In general, you're better off buying your potions from an NPC.

## Craft Magic Arms and Armor

While this feat will not increase your prowess in battle unless you are some kind of warrior-mage, it can greatly increase your party's effectiveness. Crafting a *+1 vicious keen wounding evil outsider bane sword* for the fighter will make him more effective, just like adding fortification or fire resistance to his armor will make him more effective. Making your party's front line more effective means that you are less likely to end up face to face with an angry ogre.

If you charge your party members for your services (and, since it costs you XP, you should—most PCs will be grateful for access and a slight discount from the DMG prices), you can also use the money to finance buying or crafting your own items.

## Craft Rod

As a high level feat, this has some merit. Most rods in the DMG, however, are fairly uninteresting—the *rod of splendor* is a notable exception; it allows a sorcerer to both have a Charisma enhancement and to wear a *cloak of resistance*. The metamagic feat rods are very interesting but require a very high caster level and the relevant feat. Since half of their advantage is enabling a character without the feat to use it, they are hardly a compelling argument for the Craft Rod feat.

## Craft Staff

Staffs are like wands with more flexibility and more power. While a wand will only ever cast one spell and it takes a move action to recover a second wand if you want to cast a different spell, a staff can cast multiple spells. More importantly, spells cast from a staff use your caster level and feats. A caster level 9 *wand of magic missiles*, for instance would always roll +9 when it needed to overcome SR. A staff in the hands of a 20th-level caster with Greater Spell Penetration, however, would roll +24 to overcome SR, even if it was only created at caster level 1. Some staffs even come at a discount. A *staff of fire*, for instance, can cast *fireball* fifty times at caster level 10 for just 17,750 gp. A wand of caster level 10 *fireball* would cost 22,500 gp. Unfortunately, most DMG staffs are not such a good deal. If you craft a custom staff, however, you should be able to get a better deal than you would by crafting a wand simply because you have no need to set the caster level higher than the minimum necessary to cast the spell.

## Craft Wand

Craft Wand is the poor cousin of Craft Staff—unless your GM does not allow custom staffs. In that case, Craft Wand is far more useful.

## Craft Wondrous Item

Craft Wondrous Item is the most flexible of the item creation feats, and, in many ways, the most useful. Craft Wondrous Item is what you need for all of the stat-boosting items. It is also the feat to create *cloaks of resistance*, *boots of speed*, *eyes of the eagle* and many other items which range from essential adventuring gear to useful toys. If you are only going to have one item crafting feat, it should be Craft Wondrous Item.

## Forge Ring

Forge Ring is potentially useful but suffers from the high price and limited utility of most rings as well as the very limited number of ring slots. Craft Wondrous item can create items to fill the head slot, the neck slot, the robe slot, the cloak slot, the boot slot, the belt slot, the bracer slot, and the glove slot. Forge Ring only has two slots to play with. Furthermore, the majority of rings cannot be crafted by wizards or sorcerers. *Rings of protection*, *sustenance*, *counterspells*, *animal friendship*, *water walking*, *spell storing*, *elemental command*, and *regeneration* require cleric or druid spells to make. *Rings of climbing*, *jumping*, and *swimming* require skill ranks that very few wizards or sorcerers will have. Even so, assistance from the party cleric puts the majority of rings within a wizard or sorcerer's grasp and even without them, there are still a variety of good rings that a wizard could create unaided. While it definitely has its value, there are better choices for your primary craft feat—but Forge Ring is useful as a supplemental crafting option.

## Scribe Scroll

Scribe Scroll is a bonus feat for wizards. Thus the question is not whether or not to take it, but rather how to make the best use of it. If you're playing a sorcerer, there are better item creation feats out there.

Good scroll spells fill several criteria:

1. They either don't allow saving throws or are still useful on a successful save. *fireball* is not an ideal scroll spell because it allows a save. On the other hand, *ray of enfeeblement* has some merit because it does not allow a save. *Web* is also a good scroll

spell because it still entangles a foe, even on a successful save.

2. They are effective at minimal caster level. *Hold portal* is a good scroll spell because it generally doesn't matter what level it is cast at. *Ray of enfeeblement* is a decent scroll spell because a 1d6 penalty to Strength is still a good effect but it would be even better if it had maximum effect at minimum caster level.
3. A good scroll spell is very useful when it is needed but is something that you would not regularly prepare. For instance, *command undead* allows you to take control of a single undead creature and has no save as long as the creature is mindless. If you face mindless undead, it is very useful. However, most characters will not face mindless undead on a regular basis—especially not after the low levels. If your wizard prepares *command undead* every day, it will generally be a wasted spell slot. However, if you put it on a scroll, you're guaranteed to have it when you need it and can prepare the spells that you find generally useful. At lower levels, scrolls can be used to extend your spell capacity. However, the more money you spend scribing scrolls, the less money you'll have to buy a *lesser rod of empower spell* or to craft a +3 *cloak of resistance*.

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## Spellcasting Improvements

### Augment Summoning

If you play a mage that plans on summoning monsters, get this feat as soon as possible. Its prerequisite—Spell Focus (conjuration) —is painful but you can get some use out of it with *glitterdust* and *web*. Luckily, Augment Summoning is good enough that it's worth taking the prerequisite. By increasing your minions' attack bonuses, damage, and hit points, Augment Summoning has a significant effect upon their usefulness.

### Eschew Materials

This feat is highly campaign dependent. In a campaign where secrecy is at a premium, the ability to ignore inexpensive material components could be valuable. In a campaign of kicking in doors and looting dungeons, 5 gp for a spell component pouch is a much lower price than a feat. Even so, in certain situations, Eschew Materials can be useful. A mage who polymorphs regularly will often be bereft of a material component pouch. Similarly, a mage who makes extensive use of

*magic jar* will find that the feat allows nearly full spellcasting ability while in a possessed body—a marked improvement over scouring one's spell list to find spells without material components.

## Skill Focus

There is one skill focus feat that is worth taking for some characters: Skill Focus (Concentration). Even then, it is not an optimal feat, simply a better alternative to Combat Casting. Only take other Skill Focus feats if you need them to qualify for a prestige class.

## Spell Focus

If you cast spells with saves, then you live or die by your DCs. Anything that helps them—even a little bit—is worth taking. Characters focusing on area effect damage, illusions, enchantments, or any other group of spells that generally grant saving throws ought to take Spell Focus in that area.

## Greater Spell Focus

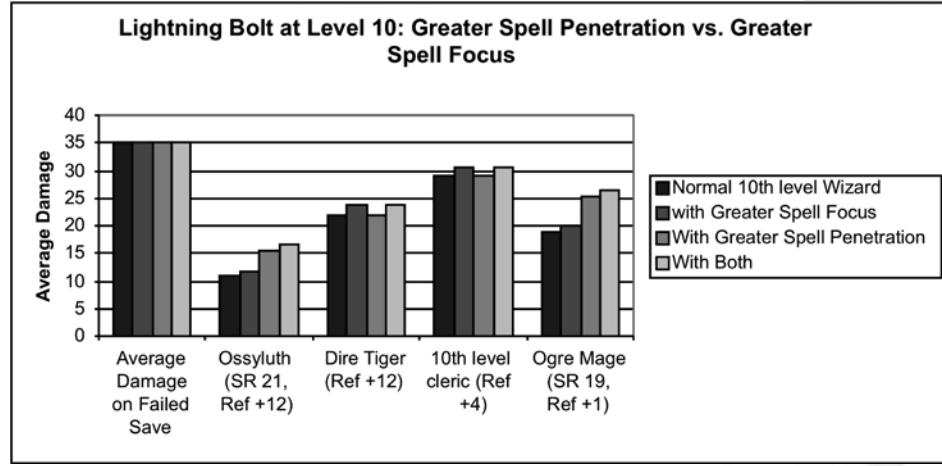
As before, anything that increases a character's DCs is worth it. If your character focuses on one type of spells and those spells have saves, you should have both Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus in it.

## Spell Penetration

At mid to higher levels, many of the foes you encounter will have spell resistance. Take Spell Penetration or learn some spells that don't allow spell resistance.

## Greater Spell Penetration

The higher level you get, the more important it becomes to have your spells work every time. If your foe can use *finger of death* at will, you want every edge you can get to make sure your *disintegrate* effects him. A quick glance at the chart demonstrates that, against foes with Spell Resistance, Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration make a bigger difference than any other individual factor.



## Other Feats of Note

### Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Saving throws are important, but familiars, stat boosting items like *gloves of dexterity*, and *cloaks of resistance* are generally better ways to increase your saving throws than feats. None of these feats are wasted but they aren't as flashy as other feats. If you do decide to get one of these feats, Great Fortitude is usually the best choice for a mage. Given their typically weak Fortitude saves, Great Fortitude will help where a mage is most likely to be targeted.

## Improved Critical

A ray specialist may be tempted to take this feat for rays. Unfortunately, however, its prerequisite BAB prevents any non-multiclassed mage from taking it before 18th level. Even at 18th level, it offers only a marginal improvement in damage potential. The difference between an empowered *disintegrate* and a normal one, or between an empowered and maximized *scorching ray* and *disintegrate*, or, to use two spells of the same level, between an empowered and maximized *enervation* and an *energy drain* is more significant than combining any of those spells with Improved Critical. For that matter, increasing the DC of the *disintegrate* spell with Spell Focus is a better way to increase its effect.

A fighter/mage will have much better results with Improved Critical for a melee weapon. Not only is the BAB prerequisite possible to meet earlier, but most martial weapons have critical qualities that are two to three times better than the critical threat of a ray.

## Improved Familiar

The value of Improved Familiar depends very much upon your campaign and the familiar you sum-

mon. Celestial and fiendish familiars are valuable to multiclassed mages (including those with prestige classes) since they grant the familiar spell resistance of 5+caster level as well as damage reduction—both of which can be very helpful to a familiar who lacks the normal defensive bonuses from a high wizard or sorcerer class level. A pseudodragon has the ability to see invisible creatures as well as telepathy, and imps and quasits have a bevy of useful spell-like abilities.

If your GM allows non-standard improved familiars, a blink dog is the safest way for a familiar to deliver touch spells since it can move, touch, and *dimension door* to safety as a free action. Whatever familiar you choose, make sure that its abilities mesh well with your own. A celestial familiar is not particularly useful for a single-classed mage and a pseudodragon is just a status symbol if you don't make use of its abilities. Making use of your familiar may also make it a target so this feat carries potential hindrances as well as benefits.

### Breaking the Game

A party full of mages with shocker lizard Improved Familiars can be a GM's worst nightmare. Since their effectiveness increases the more of them there are, the little lizards can be disproportionately deadly.

### Improved Initiative

A saboteur or back end damage specialist will often find that Improved Initiative allows him to shape the battlefield or deal area effect damage before his foes have a chance to split up and minimize the effectiveness of his spells. A character whose spells frequently deal enough damage to eliminate opponents is also dramatically more effective if he acts first, before his foes have an opportunity to act rather than after they've been able to perform even one action. However, unless your mage has a good Dexterity, Improved Initiative isn't enough to guarantee that he will go first and other feats—like Spell Focus to ensure that foes take full damage instead of half—are better choices.

### Point Blank Shot

This is a necessary stepping stone toward Precise Shot for any character who hopes to focus on front-

end damage. A quick glance at the Front End Damage, Firing Into Melee and Past Cover chart reveals that the bonuses provided by Point Blank Shot are also significant by themselves.

### Power Attack

As the premiere melee feat, power attack deserves a mention—multi-class warrior-mages, like all other non-rogue melee warriors, should have Power Attack. Power Attack also has quite a bit of synergy with the 1st-level spell *true strike*. That synergy, however, should not be exaggerated. Against low to mid-AC foes, the warrior-mage is better off charging and making a full attack with optimal Power Attack than casting *true strike* and making a single attack in the next round. For more information about using Power Attack to its fullest, be sure to check out *The Power Gamer's 3.5 Warrior Strategy Guide*.

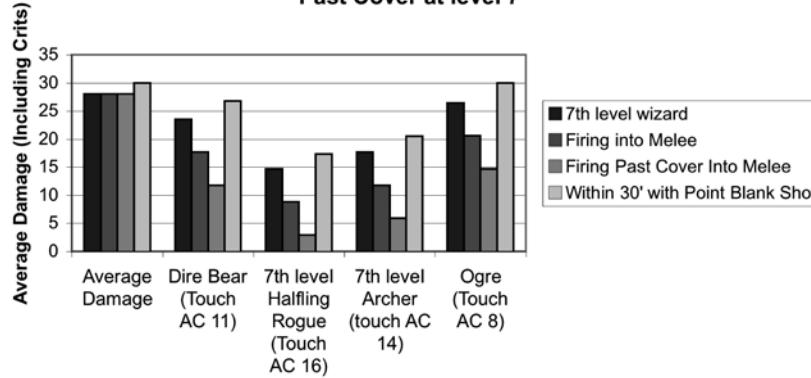
**True Strike and Power Attack vs. Charge and Full Attack**

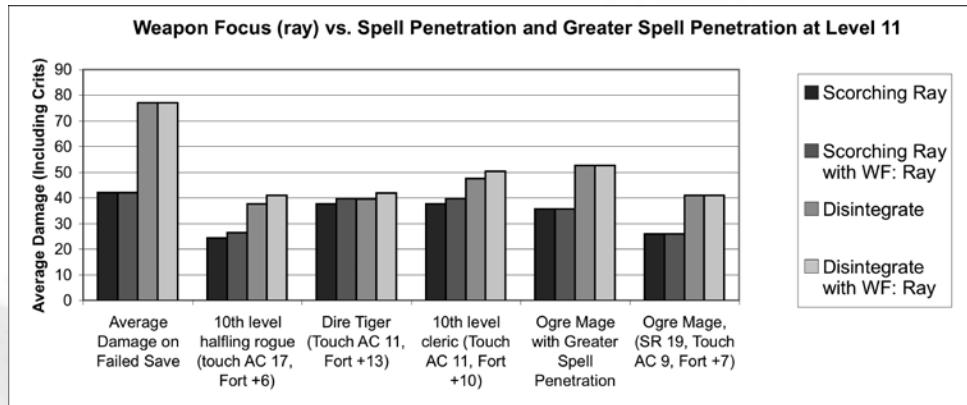


### Precise Shot

Precise Shot is necessary for any character who hopes to focus on front-end damage or make extensive use of non-damaging ray spells like *ray of enfeeblement*, *ray of exhaustion*, and *enervation*. A quick glance at the chart reveals the dramatic difference that the ability to ignore modifiers for firing into melee makes. At low levels,

**Front End Damage (Scorching Ray) Firing Into Melee and Past Cover at level 7**





Point Blank and Precise Shot are also very helpful when your wizard or sorcerer runs out of spells and needs to contribute crossbow or arrow fire to combat.

## Quickdraw

3.5 allows characters to use this feat to draw wands and other weaponlike objects as a free action. However, while that is a marginal benefit for characters who already have Quickdraw for another reason, there are very few times this would be significant for a full-time mage. If the mage uses a wand of a full-round spell as a part of his normal round 1 action, he will usually carry that wand in his hand. If, on the other hand, the full-round spell is not a part of his normal first-round strategy, then he can afford a move action to draw the wand after casting a normal spell in the first round.

Quickdraw does have some utility for warrior-mages. A warrior-mage may find it advantageous to keep his shield stowed (thus avoiding the arcane spell failure) until he wants to move into combat. In that event, Quickdraw allows the character to cast a spell in the first round, drop his two-handed weapon, ready the shield as a move action, and still draw a one-handed weapon and hold it ready to full-attack in the second round. Quickdraw also allows a warrior-mage to draw an appropriate weapon for defeating damage reduction without giving up any attacks; since warrior-mages tend to have less BAB and Strength than single-classed fighters, penetrating damage reduction by choosing the right weapon is more significant for warrior-mages than for ordinary warrior types.

## Weapon Focus

Weapon Focus is a good feat for a fighter/wizard with a melee weapon, just like it is for an ordinary fighter. Characters focusing on front-end damage and other ray spells may be tempted to

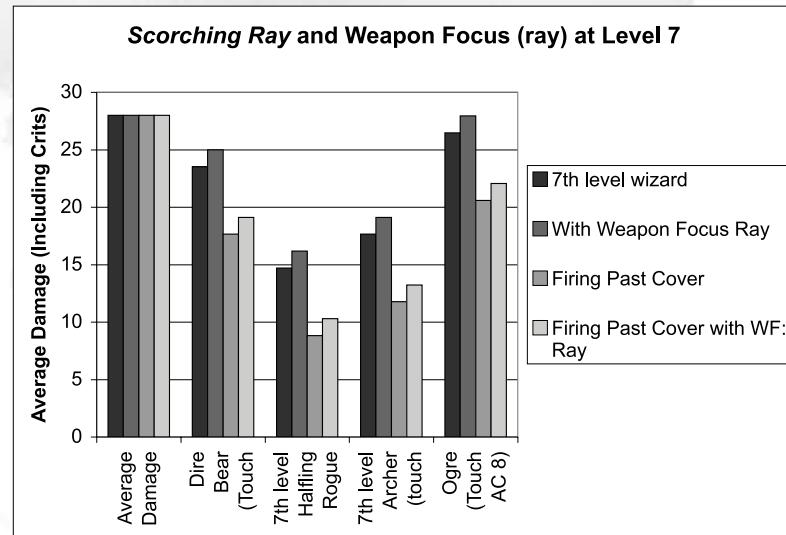
take Weapon Focus (ray). As the chart shows, however, Weapon Focus (ray) makes significantly less of a difference to average damage than Point Blank Shot and if Precise Shot did not require Point Blank Shot, it would not be as

attractive as it is. Weapon Focus (ray) might be a reasonable option for a ray-focused character if it weren't a fifth or sixth choice. Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Spell Penetration, Greater Spell Penetration, and Empower Spell are all more important than Weapon Focus (ray), even for a ray specialist—the only kind of character who would ever consider Weapon Focus (ray) in the first place.

Even so, a ray specialist might still want Weapon Focus (ray) if touch ACs didn't tend to remain static. As it stands, however, touch attacks are often a mere formality at high levels. A ray specialist is better off spending feats to gain more options—like buying Extend Spell, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus, or an item crafting feat rather than buying this feat to become marginally better at something he is already good at.

## Fool's Gold

These feats are not nearly as useful to a dominant mage as they might first appear. While the value of individual feats vary from campaign to campaign, be wary of these feats. Are they helpful? Sure. Do they help you kick ass more than the previous feats? No.



## Combat Casting

At first, this feat sounds like it might be useful for casting in combat. However, it is really a trap for inexperienced players. First, most wizards want to avoid situations where they have to cast on the defensive to begin with. Spending a feat to help avoid such situations is better than spending a feat to be slightly better in a bad situation. Second, casting defensively at DC 15 + spell level is not a very hard skill check. By 10th level or so, a wizard or sorcerer with max ranks in Concentration and a decent Constitution score should be able to automatically succeed on most spells. By 14th level, a wizard or sorcerer should be automatically succeeding on all spells.

Even then, it might be a decent option for low-level wizards if it weren't for two more facts. First, it doesn't help against what is, quite possibly, the most common and most difficult Concentration check—concentrating when taking damage while casting a spell. Second, Skill Focus (Concentration) *does* help with the check for being damaged while casting a spell and its +3 bonus is almost as good as Combat Casting's bonus for casting only under two circumstances (defensively or while grappling).

## Improved Counterspell

Improved Counterspell *almost* makes counterspelling a viable tactic. The ability to ensure that your enemy can't affect combat with spells (unless they're higher level than you can cast in that school), however, doesn't make up for having to give up your action every round in order to do it. Nine times out of ten, you're better off simply readying an attack (like *magic missile* or *fireball*) to disrupt the enemy's spell. And the tenth time... well, there are better things to spend a feat on than improving a marginal tactic one round out of ten.

## Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus, Stealthy, and other skill buffs

The name of the Magical Aptitude feat suggests it might be useful for a spellcaster. Don't be fooled. Unless your character is a sorcerer buying Use Magic Device cross-class, it won't be helpful. The same is true for most other skill increasing feats (the only exception is Skill Focus (Concentration)).

## Rapid Shot, Far Shot, *et al.*

If Point Blank and Precise Shot are very good feats for mages, surely the other archery feats must be just as good. Wrong! Rapid Shot only helps if you make a full

attack action. Most wizards aren't even proficient in bows and would need a move action to load a crossbow. More importantly, you do not take an attack action when casting a spell so you have no use for Rapid Shot. Similarly, since most spells don't have range increments, Far Shot is useless. These feats would make a mage more effective with a bow, but let's be honest; if your mage is using a bow or crossbow instead of casting spells or using scrolls or wands, something is wrong.

## Spell Mastery

Being able to prepare spells without a spellbook sounds nifty, but this feat only gives you a very limited number of spells. Worse yet, those spells will be locked in when you pick the feat and will not improve as you do. Spell Mastery for *sleep* is great at first level but useless by fourth. The value of this feat is also highly campaign dependent. In a world where your spellbook is always secure (or can be made secure), it is useless. In a world where your spellbook is constantly at risk and is regularly unavailable, it could be useful, but you'd be even better off playing a sorcerer instead of a wizard.

## Toughness

Low-level wizards don't have many hit points and toughness can look like a halfway decent feat at first level. Don't be fooled. At 6th level, a better DC on your fireballs, an initiative bonus, or even the ability to cast an extended 12 hour *false life* with a leftover third-level slot will be far more likely to save your life than three hit points.

## Weapon Specialization (ray)

Some players may consider the idea of a fighter/wizard with Weapon Specialization (ray). They should stop considering it. A fighter/wizard with Weapon Specialization (ray) casting *scorching ray* is a best-case scenario for this combination. If he hits with all three rays, he'll do an extra six points of damage. On the other hand, a similar character who only takes one level of fighter will be three caster levels ahead. With those three caster levels, even assuming that the characters get the same number of rays (which is only true at levels 7, 11, and 15+), the character with more caster levels will be able to cast more maximized *scorching rays* than the fighter 4/wizardX character will be able to cast empowered *scorching rays*. The difference between the maximized *scorching ray* and the empowered *scorching ray* is about 9 points—more than the difference that weapon specialization makes. For other spells the difference is even more significant. Bottom line—don't be fooled. Avoid this feat.

## Sample Feat Progressions

This discussion would not be complete without providing some sample feat progressions. You will notice that very few of these feat progressions are long enough to use all of a character's feats until 20th level. Unlike a warrior who will typically optimize all available feats to one style of combat, a mage can (and indeed needs to) master several strategies because every mage will run into situations where his favorite spells aren't helpful.

### Front End Blaster Wizard

A front end blaster wizard focuses upon spells that require an attack roll rather than a saving throw. Since the feats and stats necessary to be good with ranged touch attacks are the same as the feats and stats necessary to be a good marksman, a front end blaster wizard will be a competent archer at low-mid levels when running out of spells is still a worry. This wizard's greatest strength is the sheer variety of effects that are available. *Scorching ray* and *disintegrate* do massive damage. *Ray of enfeeblement*, *ray of exhaustion*, and *enervation* are very effective debuff spells that hinder an enemy's fighting capabilities in a variety of ways. *Disintegrate* can also clear away walls of force and eliminate obstacles in a character's path.

The feats are chosen to emphasize this strength. Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot are necessary in order to gain favorable odds of hitting enemies. Since the front end blaster will make extensive use of a few spells, both Empower and Maximize Spell are on the menu. Quicken Spell is chosen since very few front-end spells have saves and thus are often effective at high levels. Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration are chosen in order to ensure that the wizard can break through spell resistance.

#### Front End Blaster Wizard Feats

Level	Feat
1	Scribe Scroll, Point Blank Shot
3	Precise Shot
5	Empower Spell
6	Spell Penetration
9	Greater Spell Penetration
10	Quicken Spell
12	Improved Initiative
15	Maximize Spell, backup strategy
18	Backup strategy
20	Backup strategy

### Blaster Sorcerer

The blaster sorcerer focuses on both front-end and back-end damage and uses non-damaging front-end spells (like *ray of enfeeblement*) and non-damaging evocation spells (like *resilient sphere*) as a backup strategy. Even so, this type of blaster sorcerer is at its most effective dealing damage—either to individual targets or large groups.

#### Blaster Sorcerer Feats

Level	Feat
1	Point Blank Shot
3	Precise Shot
6	Spell Focus (evocation)
9	Greater Spell Focus (evocation)
12	Empower Spell
15	Spell Penetration
18	Greater Spell Penetration
Bonus	Improved Initiative

### Back End Blaster Wizard

The back end blaster's plan is simple and traditional: *fireball* early and *fireball* often. Needless to say, such tactics are at their most effective when fighting against multiple weak foes. Improved Initiative allows the wizard to get his spells off before his enemies act—hopefully ending the fight before it begins and at least catching them before they have a chance to scatter. Spell Focus and Spell Penetration ensure that the back end blaster's spells will have the maximum effect. Empower Spell enables the back end blaster to get the most out of spells like *fireball* and *cone of cold*. Quicken Spell initially seems like an odd choice, given the high level of all quickened back end damage spells and the dramatically reduced save DC that accompanies a quickened spell. However, Quicken Spell allows a wizard to use magic missiles to pick off weakened survivors of area effect spells or to put up defenses at the same time as attacking the enemy.

#### Back End Blaster Wizard Feats

Level	Feat
1	Scribe Scroll, Improved Initiative
3	Spell Focus (evocation)
5	Empower Spell
6	Greater Spell Focus (evocation)

9	Spell Penetration
10	Quicken Spell
12	Greater Spell Penetration
15	Backup strategy x2
18	Backup strategy
20	Backup strategy

## Controller Wizard

A controller wizard is fairly undemanding in terms of feats. With a Spell Focus in enchantment, illusion, necromancy or transmutation to ensure that his spells are not wasted and Greater Spell Penetration to get those spells past SR, all the wizard needs is Improved Initiative to control his foes before they have a chance to act. This means that a controller wizard can either explore other schools of controlling magic or start developing alternate strategies earlier than some other kinds of wizard.

Controller Wizard Feats	
Level	Feat
1	Scribe Scroll, Improved Initiative
3	Spell Focus
5	Silent Spell
6	Greater Spell Focus
9	Spell Penetration
10	Backup strategy
12	Greater Spell Penetration
15	Backup strategy x2
18	Backup strategy
20	Backup strategy

## Fighter/Wizard

Of course, there are as many kinds of fighter/wizards as there are kinds of fighters. This particular feat sequence is designed demonstrate a straightforward, melee-focused fighter/wizard who can wear the heaviest armor and still cast spells through the use of the Still Spell feat. With Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip and Quicken Spell, the character weakens a strong foe with a quickened *ray of enfeeblement*, trips that foe, lands a series of devastating attacks, and still controls a large area through the use of a reach weapon like a guisarme.

Fighter/Wizard Feats	
Level	Feat
1	Power Attack, Cleave
2	Scribe Scroll
3	Combat Expertise
6	Improved Trip, Still Spell
9	Combat Reflexes
12	Quicken Spell
15	Weapon Focus
18	Improved Critical
20	Backup fighter strategy

## Paladin/Sorcerer

The paladin/sorcerer is another kind of warrior-mage. Since he is unlikely to have the high Intelligence of the fighter/wizard and cannot use Quicken Spell, the strategies employed by the previous fighter/wizard are unavailable to him. Instead, he fights in a more traditional style and leverages his greater number of spells per day to do things the wizard could not do. Before he enters any combat, he is likely to cast *false life*. If he sustains enough damage to exhaust it, he'll cast another. At mid levels, he is likely to cast *heroism* on the entire party before entering a dangerous dungeon and keep *see invisibility* active throughout entire days of travel. Before resting, he's likely to make sure that everyone has an extended *greater magic weapon* on their primary and secondary weapons.

Paladin/Sorcerer Feats	
Level	Feat
1	Power Attack, Cleave
3	Weapon Focus
6	Still Spell
9	Extend Spell, Great Cleave
12	Improved Critical
15	Spell Penetration
18	Greater Spell Penetration

## Backup Strategies

Every mage needs to have more than one tactical option available. A mage who is only good at back end blasting will be helpless against golems or rogues. A mage who is only good at enchantment control spells will have a lot of difficulty against undead or foes with good Will

saves. Of course, very few wizards will have enough feats to concentrate upon perfecting more than a few strategies so these have been intentionally kept short.

## Summoning

It doesn't take many feats to be a good summoner. Spell Focus (conjuration) and Augment Summoning are pretty much all that can be done to improve one's summoning ability. Even though this guide associated summoning with support specialists, summoning is a good backup strategy for any archetype. Summoned creatures are not subject to spell resistance and there is rarely a saving throw against their damage. High level creatures also bring many unique abilities to bear.

### Summoning

- Spell Focus (conjuration)
- Augment Summoning

## Support

Arguably, one only needs a good selection of support spells to make good use of that strategy. However, Extend Spell can allow a mage to leverage spell slots and use several days' spell slots in order to prepare for any given assault. This enables support to be a way of adventuring rather than a few spells prepared in case of emergency. It also dramatically reduces the opportunity cost of a support strategy.

### Support

- Extend Spell

## Saving Throws

Saving throws aren't technically a backup strategy, but, like a backup strategy, good saves can keep a mage in a fight when he would otherwise be turned to stone or trapped behind a wall of ice. Since a mage's weak saves are usually Fortitude and Reflex, those are the areas in need of the most assistance.

### Saves

- Great Fortitude
- Lightning Reflexes

## Artificer

Creating magic items enables a mage to support himself and his companions in a whole new way. Mages will rarely want to select all of the possible crafting feats

but even one such feat will add several dimensions to a character.

### Artificer

- Craft Wondrous Item
- Craft Magic Arms and Armor
- Craft Staff
- Forge Ring
- Craft Wand
- Craft Rod

## Front End Blasting

A lot of mages like to carry around *scorching ray* or *disintegrate* just in case that's what they need. However, a mage who uses them a lot will often find it advantageous to spend the feats to use them well. Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot are the most essential feats for this strategy and with just those two feats, a mage has made front end spells more effective. Spell Penetration, Quicken Spell, and Empower Spell also help with this strategy, however, and the more of them your mage has, the more effective you will be.

### Front End Blasting

- Point Blank Shot
- Precise Shot
- Spell Penetration
- Greater Spell Penetration
- Quicken Spell
- Empower Spell

## Back End Blasting

Sooner or later, nearly every mage will cast a *fireball* or a *lightning bolt*. Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus in evocation are the obvious feats to make that occasional area effect spell more effective, but Empower Spell and the Spell Penetration feats should not be overlooked.

### Back End Blasting

- Spell Focus (evocation)
- Greater Spell Focus (evocation)
- Spell Penetration
- Greater Spell Penetration
- Empower Spell

# Chapter Five

# Classes & Archetypes

**B**efore we can start discussing the differences between a wizard and a sorcerer, or the various roles of the mage archetypes, we need to define a critical aspect of mage development—developing a relative measure for “power” between the two core 3.5 mage classes.

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## Mage Metric: Caster Level vs. Spell Potency

How does one measure the power of a mage? While spellcasters do not have any one statistic that captures their class-based magical ability in a single number like base attack bonus captures the capabilities of a warrior in a single number, there are two obvious possibilities: caster level and spell potency (the highest level spell available to a character). While both are valuable statistics that indicate a mage’s ability, caster level is the better overall measure of a mage’s capabilities for several reasons.

First, caster level is constant and comparable for both mages and sorcerers, and more importantly, all levels of the same class. A wizard with a caster level of 7 has the same relationship to a wizard with a caster level of 6 that a caster level 7 sorcerer has to a caster level 6 sorcerer. Spell potency, on the other hand, varies by class. A 7th-level wizard can cast 4th-level spells and a 6th-level wizard is limited to 3rd-level spells. However, a 7th-level sorcerer is still limited to 3rd-level spells, just like the 6th-level sorcerer. One could accurately say that a fighter 1/wizard 6 has lost one caster level compared to a 7th-level wizard. On the other hand, while a fighter 1/wizard 6 has lost one level of spell potency, he could cast spells of the same level as the single classed wizard at level 6 and will be able to again at level 8.

Furthermore, the fighter 1/wizard 6 has lost exactly the same thing as the fighter 1/sorcerer 6. The caster level metric enables one to see this, while the spell potency metric would lead one to believe that the fighter/wizard had lost something but not the fighter/sorcerer—until the next level when the fighter/sorcerer would have lost something but not the fighter/wizard. Caster level is a good comparison between wizard and sorcerer since it

is also gained at a constant rate that makes comparison easy.

Second, spell potency appears to be part of a balanced trade-off with spells/day and spontaneous casting. Sorcerers gain higher level spells one level behind wizards but cast spontaneously and have more spells per day. It means a different thing for a wizard to be able to cast 4th-level spells than for a sorcerer to be able to cast 4th-level spells. But having a caster level of 8 means the same thing for both the wizard and the sorcerer.

Finally, caster level directly impacts the effectiveness of spells in a variety of ways. If a mage casts *fireball*, the mage’s highest level spell is irrelevant. A 7th-level wizard and a 7th-level sorcerer will both do 7d6 damage. Furthermore, both of them will roll d20+7 (plus applicable feats or abilities) to overcome a target’s spell resistance.

There are a few abilities—such as the archmage’s spell-power ability and the *orange prism ioun stone*—that increase character level without increasing the highest level spell a character can cast. In order to deal with such abilities, it might be best to think of *base* caster level but, in most circumstances, the simpler term caster level will suffice.

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## Wizard vs. Sorcerer

One of the great 3.5 rule debates is whether the wizard is a better class overall than sorcerer. Well, unfortunately for us power gamers, there isn’t really a definitive answer to that argument—the classes are surprisingly well balanced and the class you’re going to want to play depends, as do so many things in this book, upon what kind of game you’re in and what role you wish to fill. Let’s briefly compare and contrast the two classes (see table on page 36).

Obviously, two major differences between the two classes are the core mage factors—spells known and spells/day. The wizard has a slight advantage in maximum spell level, but it eventually balances out at higher levels. The wizard can also learn more spells, but the

sorcerer can cast more. And the wizard has to lug those blasted spellbooks around if he wants to be able to cast everything in his repertoire. He's vulnerable to sadistic GMs and enemies—steal a wizard's spellbooks and he's out of luck.

	<b>Wizards</b>	<b>Sorcerers</b>
Hit Dice	d4	d4
Skill Points	2 + Int Modifier	2 + Int Modifier
Class Skills	6	6
Prime Ability	Intelligence	Charisma
Ability Dumping Ground	Charisma	Strength
Base Attack Bonus	Poor (1/2 level)	Poor (1/2 level)
Good Save	Will	Will
Poor Saves	Fortitude, Reflex	Fortitude, Reflex
Spells Known at Level 5	Unlimited*	12
Spells/Day at Level 5	10	16
Maximum Spell Level at Level 5	3rd	2nd
Spells Known at Level 10	Unlimited*	24
Spells/Day at Level 10	20	32
Maximum Spell Level at Level 10	5th	5th
Spells Known at Level 20	Unlimited*	44
Spells/Day at Level 20	40	60
Maximum Spell Level at Level 20	9th	9th

*\*Unlimited due to the fact that wizards are not restricted to a maximum number of spells known. They can continue to learn new spells and add them to their spellbook, the only practical limitations being resources and the GM's flexibility.*

A sorcerer is going to have more sheer striking power, but his limited range of spells means that he will be less flexible, especially at lower levels. If you want your party's spellcaster to be a straight blaster, saboteur, controller or support specialist, then you can't do better than a sorcerer. He knows the spells he needs, can recover them without resorting to clumsy spellbooks, and can cast more every day. But if he needs to fulfill several changing roles, he's seriously handicapped. Early on, the wizard has the advantage of flexibility, while the sorcerer has the advantage in the sheer number of spells that he can cast each day.

This gap grows less as your mages rise in level. The wizard's spells per day become enough to deal with all but the toughest foes, and the sorcerer's known spells grow to a large enough number that he can handle almost any situation. The number of spells to which a wizard has access is largely dependent on how generous the GM is in handing out scrolls, the accessibility of magic in the campaign and similar factors. In all likelihood a wizard and a sorcerer are both going to have most of their archetypes' core spells by mid-level. If you're anticipating a short or very low-level campaign, a wizard will have the advantage when it comes to flexibility.

## Your Party Plays a Role

Your choice will be influenced by party size as well. In a smaller party, characters may need to wear several different hats. The cleric can provide healing and magic, but can also fill in as warrior in a pinch, while a rogue can sneak, snipe and fight while a fighter can even use his healing potions to patch others up if the cleric is busy. In such cases, the spellcaster has fewer niches to fill—he's there to, well, cast spells. However, as we previously mentioned, the role of the spellcaster may vary depending upon circumstances.

Against hordes of kobolds, he can be a blaster, wasting huge numbers of the annoying little guys with fireballs and other area-damage spells. Against dragons, on the other hand, he'll more likely be buffing up the fighters so they can start hewing and not get fried or frozen by breath weapons. If you're fighting a similarly-equipped party, you may not want your mage to get into a magic duel with the other spellcaster, but instead prep the battlefield or cast annoying spells at the other side that their mage will have to dispel or otherwise get rid of. A wizard is going to have the advantage in the number of different spells he has access to, and starts off with an advantage over the sorcerer, but as we've noted, the gap grows less significant at higher levels.

Larger parties, or ones where the members' tasks are more clearly defined, on the other hand, might want to have two or more sorcerers, each specializing in a different area. If you're a bunch of mercenaries who expect to engage in pitched battles or sieges, then have a support sorcerer and a damage output sorcerer. If you're in an urban setting and expect a lot of close-in fights against magic-wielding opponents, a saboteur and a controller sorcerer might be better. A single sorcerer can also serve in a smaller party, especially if its tasks are going to be less varied and more predictable. As he learns more spells and grows in power, he can grow into new roles and become more flexible.

## School Specialization

As we all know, school specialization allows a wizard to take an extra spell per day in his chosen school, while preventing him from taking *any* spells in two restricted schools. In addition, you get a +3 bonus to learn spells in your chosen school. As always the big question for you is going to be—is it worth it?

Well, as a wizard has a wide range of choices available, that's going to once more depend upon the role you plan to be playing in the party, but in most cases the answer is yes. The extra spell per day is going to make you more competitive with sorcerers on the battlefield, and if you're sticking to one or two major archetypes in regard to spell selection, the school limitations shouldn't hurt you too badly. But you'll have to pick carefully.

First, let's take a look at each archetype and how many spells of each school are available. This is based on the list of core spells by archetype found in **Appendix I: Core Spells by Archetype**. You'll notice that no one has a lot of useful divination spells, but you can no longer pick divination as a restricted school. Hmm. Wonder why *that* is...

	Blaster	Controller	Saboteur	Support Specialist
Abjuration	0	0	11	15
Conjuration	2	1	17	15
Divination	0	0	3	4
Enchantment	1	28	6	2
Evocation	21	4	7	1
Illusion	2	2	11	6
Necromancy	10	14	3	0
Transmutation	2	4	3	27
<b>Total Spells</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>70</b>

## Blaster

In many cases, the smaller number of spells that it takes to be a good blaster makes it an ideal role for sorcerers. But when you're in a situation that demands versatility—the only spellcaster in the party, for example—wizards are going to be asked to fill a lot of different roles, and one of them is likely to be as magical fire support for the party. In such cases, specialize in evocation, giving you access to a range of damage-inflicting spells and letting you cast more of them per day. As for restricted schools, you've got a huge number to choose from, but illusion and abjuration are the least useful for the firepower-specialist, though this will be strongly influenced by any other roles you'll be playing in the party (we'll get into that later).

## Controller

Though the controller has a larger selection of spells, they're nonetheless heavily weighted toward enchantment and necromancy. This isn't surprising, as most of your spells are used to compel someone to do something, or to restrict their existing abilities, two things at which enchanters excel. Conjuration provides very few core spells, and a smattering of optional spells such as *trap the soul*, which though they qualify as control spells, are highly specialized and used only rarely, while illusion likewise has only a couple of nifty items (*color spray*, *rainbow pattern*) that can be sacrificed to give you more enchantment spells.

## Saboteur

You want to wreck the combat environment for your enemies. You're in luck because most of your spells don't allow saving throws as they don't directly attack anyone. Note that not only do you get the most spells of all four archetypes, but that they're distributed a lot more evenly, among illusion (by far the most), conjuration and evocation. Illusionists, especially gnomish illusionists, make excellent saboteurs.

Necromancy has no core spells except for a handful of the very powerful *symbol* spells (*death*, *fear*, *pain* and *weakness*) that can seriously mess up a battlefield for unsuspecting opponents or at the very least channel an enemy's attack away from them if they're recognized. They take time to prepare, however, so if you're going to be in a lot of random encounters or kicking down a lot of doors, you can restrict this school. If you keep necromancy, on the other hand, you might want to consider restricting transmutation (although core spells like *transmute rock to mud* are really useful; others like *stone shape* and *control water* are of limited use) and enchantment (more of the *symbol* spells and *mind fog*). It's a tough decision, but enchantment goes next.

## Support Specialist

Being a support specialist is one of the trickier archetypes when it comes to school specialization. You've got the single largest selection of spells, and if you're lucky the party will keep you in back out of harm's way so that a stray orc arrow won't end your promising career before you can exploit each and every one of them. Support is a very straightforward role, and though unglamorous, it is one for which your companions will be eternally grateful. Of your spells, the vast majority are transmutation, abjuration (protective spells) and conjuration (those lovely *summon* spells). No question that you should specialize in one of these. Unfortunately, picking restricted schools gets problematic.

The first is relatively easy. Necromancy provides only a handful of especially useful support spells such as *clone*, *false life* (which is effective only on the caster), and the *animate dead* and *create undead* spells, which are easily supplanted by the many *summon* spells provided by conjuration. With no core support spells, necromancy can be restricted. But after necromancy, your choices are harder.

You have virtually no evocation spells, so if this is going to be your role, and you don't plan on lobbing any fireballs or lightning bolts, you could make this a restricted school. But don't necessarily play the numbers game—a good wizard, especially in a small party, should have an extra damage spell or two in his back pocket for emergencies, and by restricting evocation, you're not only going to be endangering your party, you're also going to be denying yourself the satisfaction of frying the occasional goblin horde.

Well, what else then? You only have two core enchantment spells—why not drop it? Well, look at those spells: *heroism* and *greater heroism*. What self-respecting support specialist would prevent himself from casting spells that give his allies +2 or +4 to all their important rolls? No, despite the limited number of enchantments, you'll want to keep them, as they'll be an indispensable part of your arsenal. What's left? Illusion has the next fewest spells, but includes *invisibility* and similar handy effects.

The bottom line here is that school specialization for a support wizard is difficult, and will invariably result

in you losing out on at least one school that has useful spells. Necromancy can definitely go, but of the other candidates (evocation and illusion), the one you restrict is going to depend on the kind of party you're in. If you don't expect to do a lot of direct damage work, pick evocation. If your party likes to rush into combat and disdains stealth, drop illusion. If you simply can't give up either of those two, then drop enchantment.

Finally, as noted below, a support specialist has such a range of useful schools that he will be shooting himself in the foot if he specializes *and* wants to play multiple archetypes. If you're going to play any other role—support/blaster, support/control or support/sabotage—specialization will restrict your access to too many important schools. In this case, the extra spell per day isn't worth what you're giving up.

## Familiars

Where would the classic wizard or sorcerer be without a familiar? Some familiars are better than others, especially if we're discussing how to make your spellcaster more effective and dangerous in the nitty-gritty of wilderness adventuring and dungeon-crawling. We'll deal with the ten standard familiars here—other creatures will offer different benefits, but using them will require your GM's permission, and possibly some new rules.

No matter what it is, a familiar is a good deal. It's free, it doesn't take up much room, and in some cases it can

	Benefit	Speed	AC	Special Qualities
Bat	+3 Listen	5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)	16	Blindsight
Cat	+3 Move Silently	30 ft.	14	+4 Climb, Hide, Move Silently, +8 Jump, +8 Balance, use Dex for Jump and Balance
Hawk	+3 Spot (in light)	10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)	17	+8 Spot
Lizard	+3 Climb	20 ft., climb 20 ft.	14	+8 Balance, +8 Climb, use Dex for Climb, can always take 10 on Climb
Owl	+3 Spot (in shadow)	10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)	17	+8 Listen, +14 Move Silently, +8 Spot in shadow
Rat	+2 Fortitude save	15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.	14	+4 Hide, Move Silently, +8 Balance, Climb, Swim, uses Dex for Climb and Swim, can always take 10 on Climb, can always take +8 Swim bonus, can take run action when swimming
Raven	+3 Appraise	10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)	14	Speaks
Snake	+3 Bluff	15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.	15	Poison, Fort DC 10, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con
Toad	+3 hit points	5 ft.	15	+4 Hide
Weasel	+2 Reflex save	20 ft., climb 20 ft.	14	Attack attack, +4 Move Silently, +8 Balance and Climb, uses Dex for Climb, can always take 10 on Climb

be a cuddly friend who truly understands you, even when the rest of your party doesn't. When it's close by, you gain the benefits of the Alertness feat (even if your familiar is a toad; go figure), it can deliver touch spells for you, it can be your spy (though obviously your GM may limit exactly how much information it can give you), and once you're around 5th level or so your familiar will be intelligent enough to carry on at least a rudimentary conversation and pass information to you directly. One of the best features of a familiar is its ability to approach the enemy stealthily, usually beneath the notice of sentries.

So which familiar should you pick? That depends on which one gives you the biggest advantage. So here are the familiars, with their various benefits, along with details on how effective they are to a truly powerful, awe-inspiring mage.

### Bat

This one can fly, has limited ability to "see" in the dark and provides you with a bonus to Listen. Great for scouting out the enemy, as most of them won't even be able to see the little dickens fluttering in the night. They can fly over obstacles and easily disengage if spotted. Take a bat if you're going to be a controller, saboteur or if you're in a wilderness party that expects to do a lot of scouting. Bats are much less useful indoors; don't take one if you're doing a lot of dungeoneering or inside work.

### Cat

A cat is at home pretty much anywhere, and will generally allow its master to hang around as long as the food keeps coming. They're small and stealthy, and have numerous mobility bonuses. A great familiar for city adventuring, cats are also good in the wilderness and in dungeons, though if they're spotted, opponents may wonder what a domestic cat is doing hanging around. Another excellent familiar for scouting, and a cat's stealthy qualities make it effective at delivering touch spells and fleeing effectively if it's discovered.

### Hawk

Probably the premiere scouting familiar, as long as you're in daylight. A hawk can fly high (usually well out of missile range), spots easily, and provides a Spot bonus to its owner. It can circle well above the battle and keep an eye out for reinforcements, ambushes, and the location of escaping foes. The big drawback is that a hawk is less useful at night (though it can still fly and scout, albeit without the big Spot bonus), but despite

this, a hawk remains a good choice for a control or damage output specialist or any other mage who wants to maintain control of the battlefield.

### Lizard

Slow, but relatively nimble, a lizard gives you a +3 bonus to Climb. That's great if you're planning on casting spells from trees, but Climb isn't even a class skill for wizards or sorcerers. Leave climbing trees and walls to rogues and fighters—those branches interfere with somatic components anyway. A lizard's best use is to sit in hiding and keep an eye out for enemies, and they're a lot less obvious in dungeons than owls and cats, but they're best for a mage that expects to stay out of danger, such as a support specialist or controller.

### Owl

Well, an owl was good enough for that annoying kid with the weird scar from those bestselling books, and gives some pretty decent advantages, so you'll want to give one of these birds some serious consideration. In many ways they're the night-time version of the hawk, with a hefty Spot bonus and the ability to fly well away from the dangers of the battlefield, while at the same time maintaining communication with its owner. In addition, the owl is *quiet*—how many other creatures get a +14 bonus to Move Silently? You'll also be able to spot your foes a lot more effectively when you have an owl. They are at their best in the wilderness or in moonlit cities—indoors and in dungeons, like some other familiars, they're a little more handicapped by hallways, doors, and foes who will occasionally be sharp enough to ask "What the hell is an owl doing in here, anyway?" These guys are good for anyone, but are best for blasters and controllers because of their ability to reveal enemy locations, aid in observation and quickly get out of the line of fire.

### Rat

Most people consider rats to be nasty, dirty creatures, but in reality they're actually quite intelligent and affectionate, clean and easy to care for—a great pet for young and old alike! They're darn good familiars, too. Though due to their small size they can't move very fast, rats are also great at blending in, and can negotiate extremely difficult terrain. Don't discount that +2 Fortitude save bonus, either—it's one of a mage's weak spots, and anything that will boost your Fortitude save is welcome. In a party where you're going to be exposing yourself to damage, a cuddly little rat may even be a better pet than an owl. A rat is an excellent all-around

familiar, and is a good pick for a mage who expects to fill multiple roles in the party.

## Raven

It flies, it speaks, and it gives you a bonus to Appraise checks (big deal... Appraise is a cross-class skill that rarely sees use by a mage). While this grants no direct benefits in combat, a raven's two major features—flight and speech—provide significant tactical advantages (see the Combat chapter later). Maybe hawks and owls have better Spot bonuses, but neither of them can fly straight to your fighter and tell him where the enemies are and what they're doing. The raven is a tactician's bird. Don't get one if you're doing a lot of dungeoneering (it can't fly through doors), or if you're stuck with a bunch of beat-stick fighters who shun subtlety and rush straight into combat. But if you're in a military campaign, or your fellow party members like to plan their attacks, a raven is a boon, regardless of your archetype.

## Snake

Somewhat like a lizard in terms of size and mobility, the snake nevertheless has a few strengths, not the least of which is its ability to deliver poison to the enemy. A snake's going to be a controller's best friend, and can also help out the damage output specialist by thinning the herd before the fighters attack, as well as delivering touch attacks. Keep in mind that this is dangerous, however—your poor snake isn't going to last long when that minotaur scout notices it and starts laying about with its spiked club. A snake's other advantages are less obvious—it has no bonuses to hide or move silently, and how often is your wizard or sorcerer really going to use Bluff? It's another cross-class skill, and it's governed by Charisma, the wizard's dumping ground. Good luck.

## Toad

Hmm. The toad gives you +3 hit points and hides pretty well. On the plus side, it is another one of those "below the radar" creatures that most enemies are unlikely to notice, but once more, it's going to be hard to explain if it's hopping down the corridors of your local evil dark lord's fortress, or crawling through the catacombs of the thieves' guild. Though there's certain panache in selecting such an unattractive familiar, you didn't buy this book for roleplaying advice. There simply aren't any advantages that make the toad a better choice than other creatures. Put the toad in the hole and pick a different familiar.

## Weasel

Though not one of the more popular familiars in the world of literature and motion pictures, the weasel is a decent enough choice for war mages and other take-action types. It's nimble and gives you a nifty +2 Reflex save bonus (another weak save for mages), it's almost as capable as a rat when it comes to difficult terrain, and it's one of the more combat-capable familiars. A weasel is good for a mage that's going to be in the thick of the fight, while fulfilling all the other observation and scouting roles of other familiars.

# Mage Archetypes

## Blaster

*The role of a blaster:* Blaster mages specialize in one thing: dealing damage directly to their enemies. As a blaster, you target your enemies' hit points and compete with the fighter and the barbarian in the damage dealing arena. There are two differences though: you have the option of dealing damage to large groups of enemies and you deal reliable and consistent damage. A high armor class won't stop your damage and while good saves may reduce it, they don't completely eliminate it (except against those pesky rogues).

There are two important varieties of blaster mages and, while they have many similarities, they work quite differently. Front-end blasters use damaging spells that don't have saving throws and often require ranged touch attacks. Back-end blasters use damaging spells which usually have saving throws. Front-end blasters work best in campaigns where you regularly face off against one or two strong foes, in which most enemies have good saves, and for characters with a decent Dexterity but perhaps lacking an impressive primary casting ability score (Intelligence for wizards or Charisma for sorcerers). Back-end blasters work best in campaigns where groups of enemies are the norm and in which enemies tend to have mediocre to poor saves. Back-end blasting is also a good role for a character with a very good primary casting ability but who doesn't necessarily have any other good statistics.

*Party politics:* Both types of blaster mage are at home in nearly any party that doesn't depend upon subtlety. A fireball is about as subtle as a lead pipe (a very large, noisy lead pipe), but it gets the job done. In an offensively oriented, damage dealing party, a blaster mage will provide reliable and consistent damage and will soften enemies up for warrior types to cleave through. A

## Two Types of Blasters: A Summary

- ▶ *Front-end blasters* generally use spells that require attack rolls (ranged touch or touch attack spells). As such, they benefit from a higher attack bonus, Dexterity (for ranged touch attack spells) and feats that improve targeting.
- ▶ *Back-end blasters* generally use spells that require saving throws by the target(s) affected, and have access to area spells. As such, they benefit from feats and abilities which improve the required saving throws for their spells.

defensively oriented party will slow down the enemy and whittle away at them while the mage kills the enemies from behind the protection of his companions.

Like all mages, however, blaster mages need to be extremely cautious in a party without a front line. If the entire party consists of ranged attackers with only one or two members who can keep the enemies off the mage's back, most any mage will be in trouble. Your mage's companions impact what class is most advantageous for the blaster mage. An offensively oriented party will tend to finish off its battles quickly and will thus be more favorable to a wizard who, at high levels, can use Quicken Spell to make full use of his spell inventory in a short period of time. A defensively oriented party, on the other hand, will depend upon the mage to deal a larger share of the party's damage over a higher number of rounds. In such a party, the blaster mage will have to cast more spells each combat and each day. Consequently, sorcerer is a more attractive class choice in a defensively oriented party.

*Tools of the trade:* The difference between front-end and back-end blasters shows up in spell and feat selection. In previous editions of the game, being a blaster mage was just a matter of specializing in evocation and preparing a lot of *fireballs*. In third edition and 3.5, this has changed. Specializing in evocation lets you cast an extra *magic missile*, *fireball*, or *scorching ray* each day—but only if those are all the spells you prepare. If you want to prep *shield*, *protection from arrows*, and *dispel magic* as well, your wizard could specialize in abjuration and cast just as many fireballs. Since a blaster mage will almost always prepare more than one blast spell at most levels, a choice of specialty school determines what extra spells he will have on hand. What defines a blaster mage as a blaster mage is not school specialization—diviners, despite their reputation as weak combatants, make very effective blaster mages who have an extra *true strike*, *see invisibility*, and *clairvoyance* each day in addition to their selection of fireballs—but rather feat selection.

All blasters will want to take Empower Spell or Maximize Spell since those feats let them increase the damage of their spells. As a look at the damage spell table on page XX shows, the highest average damage possible from nearly every spell and caster level comes from a spell cast using metamagic feats. Front-end blasters will want Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot to help their ranged touch attacks hit. Back-end blasters will want Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus (most likely in evocation). Since nearly all of the core damage spells are resistable, blasters of both types will want Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration at later levels, when opponents regularly have spell resistance.

Most good blast spells are evocations. However, there are some other important spells worth mentioning. A front-end blaster will find a number of highly effective necromancy spells. Some of these are ranged touch attack spells like *ray of exhaustion* but *spectral hand* reduces a front-end blaster's dependence upon ranged touch spells and enables him to use normal touch attacks like *shocking grasp* with more effectiveness. Back-end blasters don't find as much in necromancy, but *horrid wilting* is a very important blast spell—both because it operates off of a Fortitude save rather than a Reflex save (and can thus target monsters and characters that have evasion) and because it is individually targetable, thus eliminating the need to avoid catching your friends in the effect. Front-end blasters also find *disintegrate*—an important high level spell—in transmutation.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that a focused blaster sorcerer needs to focus his limited spell selection on only blasting spells. Remember that what makes a sorcerer a blaster is not only spell selection but also feats. A blaster sorcerer can get by for a long time on just *magic missile*, *scorching ray* or *flaming sphere*, *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, and *cone of cold*. The sorcerer's other known spells can round out his ability and enable him to be more flexible than a blaster wizard.

A wizard who is set up for blasting needs to fill his spell slots with lots of blasting spells, making them unavailable for anything else. A sorcerer, on the other hand, can have the same selection of blasting spells and still have *fly*, *detect thoughts*, *heroism*, or *resilient sphere* available at a moment's notice. A sorcerer does need a selection of energy types available, but even that doesn't require him to know *burning hands*, *shocking grasp*, *magic missile*, *scorching ray*, *flaming sphere* and *acid arrow*. A few will suffice to make your sorcerer an effective blaster and other spells will serve to give you on-the-spot versatility.

Blaster mages are an effective archetype in a lot of situations, but as you gain levels, one-trick ponies will find that there are situations where their one trick doesn't work. Pesky rogues, monks, golems, creatures

with energy resistance, and worse yet, outsiders with high spell resistance and energy resistance all tend to be resistant to blasting. So, like all archetypes, a blaster mage needs backup strategies when his primary strategy isn't working.

There are two good ways to approach this. The first is to look for spells that synergize with the abilities the blaster mage already has. A front-end blaster, for instance, will find a good selection of necromantic spells from *ray of enfeeblement* to *enervation* and *energy drain* that reduce an enemy's effectiveness with no save and a ranged touch attack. A back-end blaster may want to put Spell Focus (evocation) to work with *resilient sphere* against energy resistant enemies. Sabotage spells like *wall of force* and *forcecage* also can work well with blast spells by boxing foes into areas where they are easily targeted. Spells like *waves of exhaustion* are also useful. Not only are they good spells in themselves, but they also reduce enemies' Reflex saves, making them more vulnerable to traditional blaster spells.

The second way to approach the backup strategy is to simply pick up the best spells from all of the other archetypes and have several backup strategies. Prepare a *ray of enfeeblement* for weakening your foes, a *haste* to aid your allies, and *solid fog* to slow your enemies and control the battlefield. This option is particularly effective for sorcerers who generally don't have enough known spells to have a full suite of spells for every archetype and have to make do by cherry-picking only the best spells from their non-primary roles.

*A blaster's familiar:* A blaster mage need not make extensive use of his familiar. A toad or rat who never leaves his master's pocket grants three hit points or a bonus to Fortitude saves and never need do anything else. There are, however, a few things that familiars are suited for. A mobile and stealthy familiar like an owl or a rat can serve as a spotter for the mage's artillery, conveying information on where to target area spells through fog clouds, underbrush, or other entangling features. Many GMs will restrict the accuracy of such information, but with a fairly intelligent familiar, you may get close enough. As they say, close only counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, and *fireballs*. For the more daring, familiars can make touch range attack spells more viable. Though it is risky, a mobile familiar can deliver a *shocking grasp* or *vampiric touch* to a foe outside of your movement range.

mobility and variables less tangible than raw hit points. Buffing your allies is the role of the support mage—you want to screw up the enemy and make it harder for him to damage you.

*Party politics:* In which type of party will a controller be most at home? Well, just about every archetype is going to work well with a melee/direct attack party. Where the direct damage mage blasts foes with *chain lightning* and *magic missile*, your controller is going to weaken the enemy and make them less capable of responding to your fighters with spells like *confusion*, *blindness/deafness* or *mage's disjunction*.

The controller is less useful to a group that specializes in ranged combat, as fewer of his spells have the long range of blaster spells and rarely make the enemy easier to hit, though there are several that reduce enemy movement and mobility. In a stealthy group, the controller will want to coordinate attacks with his allied warriors and rogues, being careful to weaken the enemy without giving the party away.

One thing to keep in mind is that a controller's spells usually weaken or impair, but rarely outright kill a foe. This isn't as bad as it might seem, since a foe fights exactly as effectively at one hit point as he does at 300—there's usually no middle ground, and anything that can weaken an opponent or reduce combat effectiveness is going to make it that much easier for your party to finish him off. This is, however, another reason a mage may adopt dual roles as controller and blaster.

*Tools of the trade:* The controller's good selection of spells makes him versatile—he can stay out of the fray if opponents are tough, and get in close if he has good coverage from his warrior-types. Most of his effective necromancy spells (*bestow curse*, *contagion*, *vampiric touch*, etc.) are touch spells, however, and if he's going to use them he'll either have to risk his familiar or get close enough to risk taking damage himself. This is doubly true if he's also working as a support or sabotage specialist (see below).

Almost half of a controller's appropriate spells are from the enchantment school, followed by necromancy. If you're specializing, you'll probably be an enchanter or possibly a necromancer, and you'll want to do everything you can to make your enchantment spells more effective. A controller wants to make enchantment spells harder to resist, so Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus are among your most important assets. Enlarge Spell allows you to control the enemy from a safer distance, Extend Spell makes negative effects last longer, and Heighten Spell once more makes it harder to save against your controlling effects. All of these are going to be useful to the control specialist.

## Controller

*The role of the controller:* The controller mage specializes in spells that affect enemy performance and abilities. Controllers damage the enemy's stats, skills,

*Controllers with multiple roles:* If you're a wizard and want to take multiple roles in the party (in small parties, or if you're the only mage), a controller is a good middle-of-the-road archetype that doesn't interfere unduly with other jobs, allowing you to work within two or more archetypes. Your selection of spells is a good match for the damage output specialist—neither has a large number of divination or illusion spells. Controller spells complement the damage output specialist, by either weakening the enemy before casting massive damage spells or further reducing their abilities after you've launched your heavy artillery. Either way, you're seriously weakening or eliminating opponents before the combat types go in, and you've got enough spells to keep helping even after melee has begun.

The controller can also double as a saboteur or support specialist, though it will be a little bit trickier if you wish to specialize since the spell schools don't overlap as neatly—in general, if you're going to combine support with any other role, specialization may not be recommended. You should have access to a wide range of spells if you want to play these multiple roles, since the only school you can skimp on is divination—which can no longer be discarded to meet school specialization requirements. Keep in mind that these two archetypes also usually stay in the background, well out of combat, due to the nature of their favored spells. If you're going to combine them with a controller, who may find himself closer to danger, make sure you're well defended or have a good selection of personal protective spells.

If, on the other hand, you expect to be in a larger group, or in a caster-heavy group, you're best off focusing on your controller spells and specializing in enchantment. In many ways, this is a better deal for you, as it allows the other casters to take up the slack when it comes to direct damage and enhancing party abilities, while you concentrate on what you do best—messing up the enemy and making it harder for them to use their skills, feats and combat abilities. Though it's one of the better archetypes to share with another, the controller works best when he uses his spells to complement and enhance another spellcaster. Pure controllers work best in parties of more than five, or when there is more than one spellcaster.

If you're a sorcerer, your limited selection of spells means that you'll be stuck in a single role most of the time, though controller is a solid archetype even if there's less glory there than in being a bolt-lobber. A few non-archetype spells won't hurt, and may be critical in a major combat situation, but don't take more than one or two reliable spells to avoid watering down the effectiveness of your chosen archetype.

*A controller's familiar:* As for familiars, you'll be best off with a fairly mobile creature that can keep an eye on opponents' movements and deliver touch attacks if necessary. A hawk or owl gives you bonuses to spotting the enemy and can stay well away from missile weapons and most spells, so your choice will depend upon the time of day you expect to do most of your fighting. In the wilderness, where you'll be on the move most of the day, a hawk will help, while an owl is better if you're moving at night or are in enemy territory where you'll more likely to be ambushed. Ravens can observe and report back to you or to your companions, due to their speech abilities. Rats and weasels remain good choices as well, as they are small and unobtrusive, can hide and escape from danger, and can subtly delivery touch attacks, often entirely unnoticed. Other familiars are less use to the pure controller.

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## Saboteur

*The role of a saboteur:* Being a saboteur is, above all else, fun. You manipulate combat conditions to the advantage of your party and the detriment of others. You change the environment, put up walls, obscure your allies, make it harder for the enemy to maneuver, block his path and impede his progress, while at the same time paving the way for your allies. Even if the enemy has home field advantage, a saboteur can quickly level the playing field. The effects of a masterful saboteur on a party's performance may be subtle and easily overlooked, but a party should find that combats tilt in their favor more often than not, and they perhaps expend fewer resources dispatching their foes.

*Party politics:* As a rule, saboteurs act, rather than react. Their job is to assess conditions, evaluate potential enemies and select the most effective spells. They're at their best in a set-piece situation where there's time to prepare, such as ambushes, defending a fortress or landmark, or setting up defenses for the party's camp at night. This is not to say that they can't make snap decisions, or that they shouldn't be prepared to change plans at a moment's notice, however, but saboteurs need more long-term awareness of conditions than blasters and controllers, who rely on snap decisions more often.

You're safer focusing on sabotage in a larger group, or in one with more than one mage. In that case there are fewer drawbacks to specializing in illusion, as well. You'll have the fun of screwing up enemy strategies by wrecking the battlefield, while at the same time you can let the combat mages or warriors take the brunt of the unpleasantness when swords are finally drawn. As with the other archetypes, it's best to focus on a single role if you're in a bigger group, or one that's caster-heavy.

*Tools of the trade:* A sabotage specialist is at his best when he's in the back and out of harm's way. He's useful for a melee-based party where there's a clearly defined front-line, and a safe rear rank. He's usually going to be back with support specialists, casting *grease* or *web* to slow the enemy down, *gust of wind* to mess with enemy missile fire, *obscuring mist* to hide your allies or *wall of fire* to impede enemy movement. Most of these spells affect terrain or the environment and hence have no saving throw, and most can also be cast from a relatively safe distance away. Even such useful touch spells as *darkness* are cast on objects or on your allies, or by the stealthy use of familiars, so you're going to be at your best when you're able to stay safely away from enemy activity.

Your defensive spells also make it less likely that the enemy will even be able to reach you, but you're still vulnerable to missile attack, ranged spells and flying foes, so be sure to keep a wary eye out for such things, and have your warriors do the same. They don't want to lose their precious saboteur just when they have the demon penned up by *walls of iron*.

Saboteurs' spells fall into the schools of illusion, evocation, abjuration and conjuration. A specialist saboteur, as we've discussed above, is most likely to be an illusionist (and possibly a gnome due to that race's advantages in the illusion school). Most of your spells don't allow a saving throw, as they are not cast directly upon opponents. A few, such as mobility-reducing spells like *grease* and *web*, allow a Reflex save. Spell Focus will improve your chances of success with these spells, but this feat isn't as important as it is to controllers and blasters. On the other hand, Enlarge Spell is very handy, as it keeps you even further out of harm's way, and Extend Spell makes the enemy have to deal with the negative battlefield conditions for even longer.

*Saboteurs with multiple roles:* In our small-party model, a saboteur mage who needs to fill several roles will do best to consider sharing his sabotage duties with that of a support mage, as both do best when away from the worst of the fighting. In such a case you run into the problems inherent in the support specialist when it comes to specializing, however, as you'll have to drop at least one useful school, and if you're in this position you may not want to specialize at all. Though your spell selection makes you a good match for also being a control specialist, you'll also have to deal with the fact that you're more likely to be involved in melee, and should keep a warrior or protective spells close at hand. Combining this role with that of a blaster can be rewarding, as their spells definitely work well together, but the danger of getting your skull split by an irritated hill giant is even greater.

The sorcerer saboteur faces the same conundrum as he does in other archetypes. He's an exemplary saboteur and can easily outgun a wizard of similar level. On the other hand, he doesn't really have the flexibility to allow him to be anything else. Since most of the time you won't be facing direct combat, you don't have to have a lot of offensive spells — take *magic missile* and be ready to use it if need be — but be prepared to otherwise do one thing, and do it well. You won't have as many opportunities to blow things up as a blaster, but many of your spells will be similarly dangerous to the enemy.

*A saboteur's familiar:* Observation is one of a saboteur's most important qualities, and the selection of familiars should reflect this. Smaller, more unobtrusive creatures that can see battlefield situations develop and relay information to their masters are best — again, the rat and weasel excel at this. While flying creatures give an outstanding view of the battlefield, they are far more likely to attract unwanted attention. A snake or lizard can also slip by unnoticed. More than other archetypes, the saboteur relies on his familiar to act as his eyes and ears.

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## Support Specialist

*The role of the support specialist:* The warriors and battle mages may get all the glory and credit, but the support specialist knows that he plays a pivotal, if unheralded, role in a party's combat effectiveness. The life of a support specialist may not be glamorous, but their ability to augment, or "buff," their party's abilities, skills and damage output is incredibly important. The support specialist also provides strong defensive buffs and protection, balancing a strong offense with a stout defense.

The support specialist relies on spells than enhance their comrades rather than impair their opponents. The advantage of this type of magic is that there is no need for boosting saving throws higher than normal since nearly everyone is going to want the beneficial spells you're going to be casting. A support mage also helps improve party efficiency. You may find that a group with an effective support mage spends less "down time" between encounters, conserves fewer consumable resources (like potions, wand charges and the like), and achieves their goals with fewer setbacks.

*Party politics:* Any group will benefit from a support mage, but the play style and class composition can impact how the support specialist fulfills his role. Larger groups with a strong melee combat presence will benefit from a support mage's buff spells which directly impact damage output and chances to hit, such as *magic weapon*, *bull's strength*, and *heroism*. Groups with other mages can benefit in a variety of ways. Blaster mages, for instance,

could benefit from having their primary casting stats boosted with *eagle's splendor* or *fox's cunning*, as well as protecting them with *blur*, the abjuration school's *protection from* series of spells, and other defensive spells.

Smaller parties may benefit from a support specialist that chooses spells with broader applications, so that any member of the party can benefit from their spell list, rather than only a few. While a sorcerer has fewer known spells to provide a wide range of support effects, he can focus on the group's greatest needs and cast those spells frequently.

A support specialist also benefits greatly from a patient, strategic group. The support specialist can provide the greatest impact when given the time to prep the party before combat, rather than jumping in and out of the fray to buff warriors in the midst of melee.

*Tools of the trade:* A support specialist has a wide number of spells at his disposal. Many of the spells are transmutation spells, and a wizard who wishes to specialize in a spell school should definitely select transmutation, as listed earlier in the chapter.

Conjuration would seem like a school worth banning if you choose to specialize, as only *mage armor* and *teleport* fall under the support role within that school. If you opt to ignore all the *summon* spells, conjuration is an excellent option—ban it. However, summoning minions to aid in battle or use their special spell-like abilities can be incredibly beneficial. If you like the idea of having those summoning spells available to you, then keep conjuration, and use those summon spells often both offensively and defensively.

Summoned creatures are incredibly handy to a support specialist, since they function independently, allowing you to focus on other matters. Plus, they still let you have a say in battle with minimal risk. And the best thing about summoned creature—they're not subject to saving throws or spell resistance!

When choosing your support spells, select spells that have multiple applications, or can affect more members of your party. The stat boosting spells like *bear's strength* and *cat's grace* can be helpful both in and out of combat, should you need a slight bump to an important skill check by raising the related ability. You may wish to keep one or two defensive spells on hand for self protection, like *mirror image* or *mage armor*, but you really should focus on boosting your party to their best potential—the quicker they cut down your foes, the less risk posed to your own delicate hide.

Perhaps the most important spell early in a support specialist's career is *invisibility*, as it affords numerous

benefits. You can use it to sneak stealthily past foes, provide a rogue a guaranteed strike at a flat-footed opponent, or protect yourself when the tide turns against you. *Fly* and *haste* are other staples of the support specialist, affording movement benefits and improving your party's combat options, as well as having use outside of combat. *Magic circles against alignment* are solid spell selections, since they encompass a larger area, and allow multiple party members to benefit from a single spell, while lasting for a decent amount of time.

There are very few ways a support specialist can make a bad decision when selecting spells, since different spells will hold different value from campaign to campaign. If you're agonizing between a few different spells, often the best spell will be the one that can benefit a variety of different party members, provides a solid benefit under a variety of circumstances, and provides a non-combat advantage.

When it comes to augmenting your spells with metamagic feats, the support specialist benefits from the Extend Spell and eventually Widen Spell to improve the amount of time or number of people affected by their spells. A support specialist relying on summoning spells would do well to select Spell Focus (conjuration) and Augment Summoning to get the most out of their summonings.

As an added benefit, a support specialist enjoys the flexibility of using their feats to build backup strategies or tailor their character to different tastes. Since the support mage's spells affect their own party and generally don't directly impact an opponent, they don't need to worry about boosting their spells' save DCs with Spell Focus, or improving their odds of overcoming spell resistance with Spell Penetration.

*A support specialist's familiar:* While other mages may rely on their familiar as their eyes and ears, the support mage relies most on his familiar as his hands. Things never seem to go as planned, so a support mage will often find himself without ample time to cast his buffs before an encounter is initiated. A nimble, mobile familiar like a rat or weasel allows the support mage to cast his touch-based buff spells during the thick of things, without exposing himself to risks. Similarly, a familiar with flight allows a support mage to provide benefits even when separated from his party across the battlefield—making ravens, bats, hawks and owls strong choices, as well. Since familiars share a mage's own buff spells as long as it stays within five feet of the mage, a support mage's familiar will have the chance to be a bit more durable during an encounter. One tactic would be casting *mage armor* or *protection from evil* before having your familiar take a five foot step to deliver *bull's strength* to the party's barbarian.

# Chapter Six

# Spell Selection by Archetype

Warriors have it easy—all they have to do to improve their party function is pick the shiniest sword or axe with the coolest enhancements that let them pummel things faster or with more oomph. Or they pick out a new set of bulky armor and another trash can lid they can wave around like a shield. They lack the creativity and intelligence to make the decisions a dominant mage faces... but the warriors serve their purpose. Remember, the longer they keep enemy minions tied up, the more impressive your carefully selected repertoire of spells will be.

Now that we've fully defined the different archetypes, their roles within a group and some of the nuances associated with these roles, it's time to take a closer look at one of the most agonizing decisions when playing a mage — selecting your spells. There are always more tempting options than spells slots available, so you've got to make the most of the opportunities when they present themselves. Poor spell selection is a surefire way to knock a mage down from *dominant* to *doormat*.

Wizards have the luxury of eventually being able to learn more spells and access a plethora of magical options, but need to be savvy about which spells to prepare and have on hand when adventuring. Sorcerers, on the other hand, really need to make sure they're selecting spells that help them fulfill their role, as they have very few known spells to work with—and it better be something they'll be able to cast over and over again to take advantage of their class abilities.

## Blasters

If you want to dish out the damage in combat, you'll have to pick the right spells. Everyone knows that

*arcane sight* isn't the best spell to prepare if you want to beat the GM and make him cry for more hit points, but which are the best spells? To determine that, you need to look at the factors that influence spell damage.

### Comparing Spell Damage

#### 1. Average Damage is the Key

- #### The Factors of Spell Damage
1. Average Damage is the Key
  2. Success or Failure — To Hit or To Save
  3. Damage Now — the More, the Better
  4. What Are You Blasting?
  5. Where Are You Blasting?
  6. Different Spells At Different Levels

The first step to comparing spells is to compare average damage. Sometimes you'll roll better than average and sometimes you'll roll worse than average, but overall, unless you're a professional gambler or have weighted dice, your numbers should come out about average. Does a *magic missile* deal more damage than an *acid arrow*? At 3rd level, a *magic missile* deals  $2d4+2$  damage. That averages out to 7 points of damage. At

3rd level, an *acid arrow* deals  $2d4$  damage each round for two rounds. That's an average of 10 points of damage spread over two rounds. So, on the average, the *acid arrow* deals more damage.

#### 2. Success or Failure — Do You Need to Hit, or Do They Need to Save?

The second step is to consider how likely the spell may partially or completely fail. A spell that requires an attack roll does nothing if it doesn't hit. A damage spell that has a saving throw generally does half damage on a successful save. A spell that has both an attack roll and a saving throw (like *disintegrate*) will usually end up doing a lot less than maximum damage.

Going back to the previous example, *magic missile* always hits unless the foe has a *shield* spell active or is wearing a *brooch of shielding*. So *magic missile*'s real

		Odds of a Successful Ranged touch attack												
		Touch AC												
Attack bonus		8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	15%	10%	
2	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	15%	
3	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	
4	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	
5	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	
6	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	
7	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	40%	
8	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	45%	
9	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	
10	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	
11	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	
12	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	
13	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	
14	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	
15	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	80%	
16	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	85%	
17	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	90%	
18	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	
19	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	
20	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	

average damage is still 7 points. *Acid arrow*, on the other hand, requires you to hit with a ranged touch attack in order to inflict any damage. So if you're a 3rd-level wizard with a 14 Dexterity, and you're fighting Sir Stoneshoes who has a touch AC of 11, you need to roll an 8 or higher to hit. Since you will only hit 65% of the time, the average damage you will get *per casting* of *acid arrow* is only 6.5 points, spread out over two rounds.

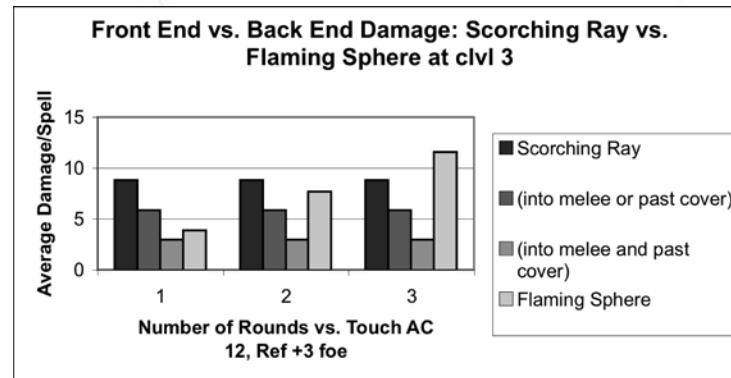
Unless your mage's feats are focused towards success with ranged touch attacks, you will notice that ranged touch attack spells tend to be more effective at high levels and, unless you spend feats to increase your spell's save DCs, spells requiring saving throws tend to be more effective at lower levels. As you can see by looking at the *scorching ray* vs. *flaming sphere* chart, at low levels, unless you have ideal conditions or Precise Shot, it only takes one round for *flaming sphere* to become more effective than *scorching ray*.

With the exception of *flaming sphere*, however, all core back-end damage spells have an area effect. While all front-end damage spells are not quite single target—you could target different foes with each ray from a *scorching ray* spell if you wanted

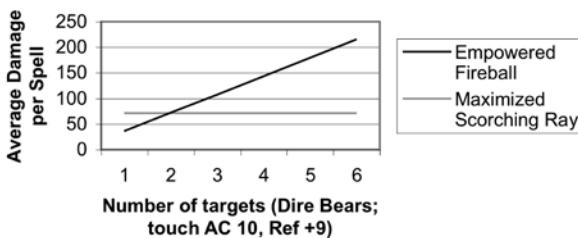
to—for practical purposes, they generally target single opponents. Looking at the Area Effect vs. Single Target table, you can see that it only takes two targets before an empowered *fireball* will deal an amount of damage equal to a maximized *scorching ray*.

### 3. Damage Now—the More the Better

The third step is to consider *when* you get the damage. Damage right now is almost always better than damage in one or two or three rounds. It doesn't help you that your *acid arrow* will kill the troll next round if the troll kills you this round. He may die in a few seconds, but



**Area Effect vs. Single Target Damage  
(Maximized Scorching Ray vs.  
Empowered Fireball at lvl 11)**



you're dead now. (In case you haven't figured it out by now, you should prepare *magic missile* instead of *acid arrow*. The only thing *acid arrow* has going for it is that it is equally ineffective against targets with spell resistance as it is against targets without it—as opposed to *magic missile* which is effective against targets without spell resistance and only less effective against targets with spell resistance instead of being useless.) Similarly, a *flaming sphere* will deal 10d6 damage over five rounds for a 5th-level caster, but that's not the same as dealing 10d6 damage right now. So, when is damage over time (or DoT) useful?

Damage over time is more useful when you can change the target. In the d20 system, enemies have their full offensive capacity whether they're at 1 hit point or 100. An ogre barbarian with one hit point can kill you just as effectively as an ogre barbarian with full hit points. Consequently, it is usually a good idea to concentrate your party's fire and bring each individual enemy down as quickly as possible. Parties that work together effectively will usually concentrate on dropping one or two foes every round. If you cast an *acid arrow* at the enemy to take it down and the acid continues to do its damage over time to the foe's corpse, it generally does you as much good as critically hitting a 4 hit point goblin with your great axe for 65 hit points of damage. On the other hand, if you can switch the target after you take that first foe down, damage over time is a lot more useful. For instance, if Kimberly the sorcerer burns a goblin to death with her *flaming sphere* in the round she casts

it, she can burn a different goblin to death in the next round.

Even if you can change targets, it is possible for a lot of damage from DoT spells to go to waste. If you cast *flaming sphere* and it will last ten rounds but the battle only lasts three rounds, that's seven rounds of damage that are wasted. In general, only the first few rounds of damage from DoT spells are significant. After that, the combat is generally over or the spell's effect diminished. Damage over time never lives up to its promises. It can be useful, but it becomes less and less significant the longer it takes to deal the damage.

#### 4. What Are You Blasting?

Another important factor to consider is *who* receives the damage. In general, dealing 63 points of damage to one target is preferable to dealing 35 points of damage to two targets since the concentrated damage may enable your party to take the one single foe down this round and thus reduce the amount of damage your party is likely to take. This is an area where you really need to consider the rest of your party. If the party's warrior

type has the Great Cleave feat, a large group of almost dead enemies is a dream come true. On the other hand, if the party's warrior does not have feats to let him attack multiple foes, blasting a few select foes into oblivion (who then can no longer attack him) is probably better than damaging many that will then still pose a threat.

#### The False Promise of Damage over Time (DoT)

It's time to dispel a myth. Continuous damage is not worth significantly more than normal damage. Sure, a spell caster taking continuous damage has to make a Concentration check (DC  $10 + \frac{1}{2}$  damage + spell level) to cast a spell. But it's not that significant. Continuous damage like *acid arrow* is generally pretty low, so the Concentration DC is rarely high enough to make a difference.

A typical 3rd-level wizard will be able to make the Concentration check to cast *glitterdust* with an *acid arrow* eating through his chest on a roll of 6 or higher. If you're a 3rd-level wizard and want to disrupt an opponent's spellcasting, you're far more likely to succeed by readying an action to disrupt his spell with a *magic missile*. The same enemy will need to roll an 11 to make the DC 19 Concentration check to pull that off. Better yet, there's no chance of missing entirely.

#### 5. Where Are You Blasting?

The position of your foes is also important. If you are facing a large group of foes in a small area—for instance, a hundred skeletons in a ten-foot-wide corridor—then area damage is better than taking one or two of them down. In that kind of a situation, the party's front line will take the same number of attacks regardless of the number of enemies you kill. Consequently, the important factor is how quickly you kill all of the enemies rather than how many individual foes you take down per round.

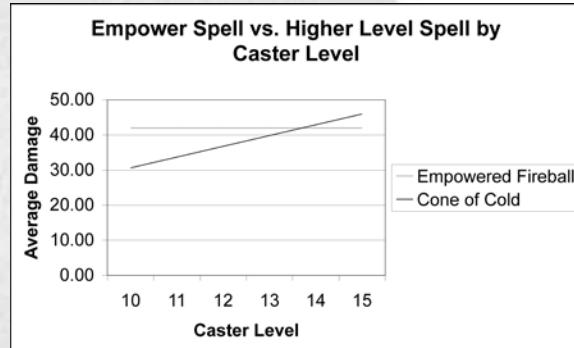
## 6. Different Spells at Different Levels

One more thing to consider: all spells are not equally useful at all levels. For instance, *shocking grasp* is pathetic at level 1, impressive at level 5, and gradually dwindles to insignificance again by level 9—at which time, *magic missile* does just as much damage at range, and without any attack roll. Similarly, *flaming sphere* is a good spell at level 3, is getting long in the teeth by level 6, and is completely eclipsed by *scorching ray* at level 7. Wizards have a bit more freedom to select spells with a short life span than sorcerers because they can just spend some gold and get a new spell to prepare in their place. Sorcerers have a much more limited ability to dump spells but they can still keep *flaming sphere* until level 8 and then trade it out for *scorching ray*.

### The Half Life of Burning Hands

Now, let's go into some specifics. Not all spell levels are equal. If you want back-end damage in a first level spell, you're stuck with *burning hands*. It's not a bad spell, but it requires you to get close to your foes to use it. Similarly, if you want front-end damage in a third-level spell, you're stuck with *vampiric touch* or lower level spells augmented with metamagic feats—empowered *magic missile*, empowered *shocking grasp*, or enlarged *scorching ray*. If you don't want to wade into melee with your low AC and d4 hit points, most of those are bad ideas.

At higher levels, metamagic can make a much bigger difference. Fourth level doesn't feature much good back-end damage (*shout* is a weak spell and *ice storm* a mediocre one), but Empower Spell allows an empowered *scorching ray* for front-end damage. 5th level picks up empowered *fireball* and *lightning bolt* which eclipse *cone of cold* until level 15 or so. It also picks up quickened *magic missile* and maximized *scorching ray*. 6th level has *chain lightning* and *freezing sphere* for back-end damage, and picks up quickened *scorching ray* and empowered *enervation* for front-end damage. This is one of the most significant advantages of metamagic: creating devastating spells of the kind your mage uses at spell levels where you ordinarily wouldn't have anything.

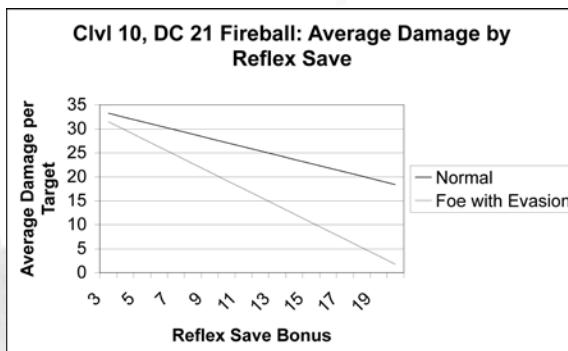


The ability to create useful spells at levels where you did not have them is rendered more important when another factor is considered: most damaging spells have a limited fe span. As your mage increases in level, he will face tougher opponents with better saves. At the same time, the hit points of a typical foe rise, making even the damage that does get through less significant. Sooner or later, the damage you can deal with certain spells—especially back-end damage spells which are constrained by saving throws as well as damage dice limits—will not be worth the standard action it takes to cast them. Not only is it important to have higher level versions of damage spells because it enables your mage to make full use of his feats (even with spell levels where he wouldn't ordinarily have much use from them)—it is also important to have higher level versions of spells because lower level spells will eventually fade into obsolescence.

Although it depends upon the specific adventure and campaign, typically, only your highest three or four spell levels (or spell slots when using metamagic feats) will be productive for back-end damage spells. Front-end damage spells remain useful somewhat longer, but, by 15th level, even *scorching ray* is beginning to get a little long in the tooth and is primarily useful against cold subtype creatures rather than as a general target spell. Lower level spell slots are still useful for defensive and utility spells, or for quickened front-end damage (low save DCs cripple quickened back-end damage spells), but they rapidly pass the point where they are useful for primary damage spells—either front or back-end.

## The Importance of Flexibility

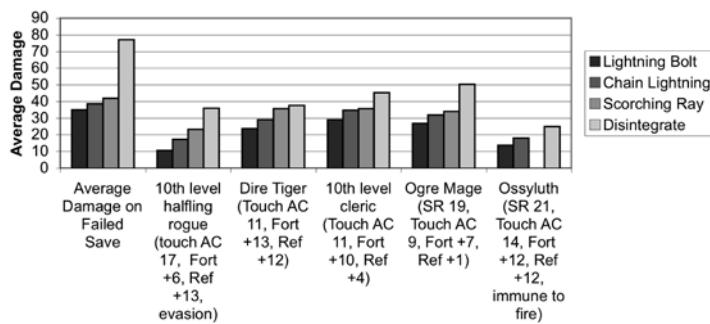
A character's selection of damage spells should always lean towards the areas in which the mage has focused. A character with Point Blank Shot will focus on front-end damage and a character with Greater Spell Focus (evocation) will focus more on back-end damage. Otherwise, their feat selection isn't helping them. However, even a character focused on one kind of damage or the other is wise to have a few damage dealing spells of the other kind available. Against a single target, front-end



damage spells are almost always better than back-end damage spells. Front-end damage spells, though, are useless against some other kinds of foes. Swarms, for instance, are immune to front-end damage spells but are especially vulnerable to back-end damage.

Furthermore, it is important to have a selection of a few damage types available to your mage. If you have filled all of your slots with *burning hands*, *fireball*, and *scorching ray*, a simple *resist energy (fire)* can shut you down completely. If, on the other hand, you have a few *magic missiles*, a *lightning bolt*, and an *ice storm* prepared, you have a few things to fall back on if you wind up fighting a fire elemental. Non-elemental damage like *magic missile*, *disintegrate* and *horrid wilting* is especially valuable in this regard.

**Front End vs Back End Damage (11th level Wizard)**



### Front-End Damage and *Spectral Hand*

Several otherwise useful front-end damage spells (and more than a few non-damaging spells such as *touch of fatigue*, *bestow curse*, and *touch of idiocy*) have a range of touch. While this is no obstruction to a warrior-mage who often fights at close range to make use of the weapons, armor, and BAB of his warrior class, it is a severe impediment for an ordinary mage. *Spectral hand* levels the field by giving touch spells a range as good as any useful front-end damage spells. This is especially useful for a mystic theurge who will not only have an expanded selection of damage spells (the *inflict wounds* series) but also can make use of the *spectral hand* to heal allies without risking the danger of melee.

### Placing Area Effect Spells

Sometimes it is difficult to target a *fireball* or *glitterdust* without affecting your allies. Even with a template, there is often too much area within a fireball or other area of effect spell. At those times, it is helpful to remember that d20 is as much a 3-dimensional game when you cast *fireball* as it is

when you cast *fly* or when you are standing on a wall. If you center a *fireball* twenty feet above the ground, you will only catch four people in its blast. If you center it fifteen feet above the ground, only a ten foot radius will be affected on the ground. Controlling your area affect spells by varying their vertical targeting is a key skill for getting the most out of them.

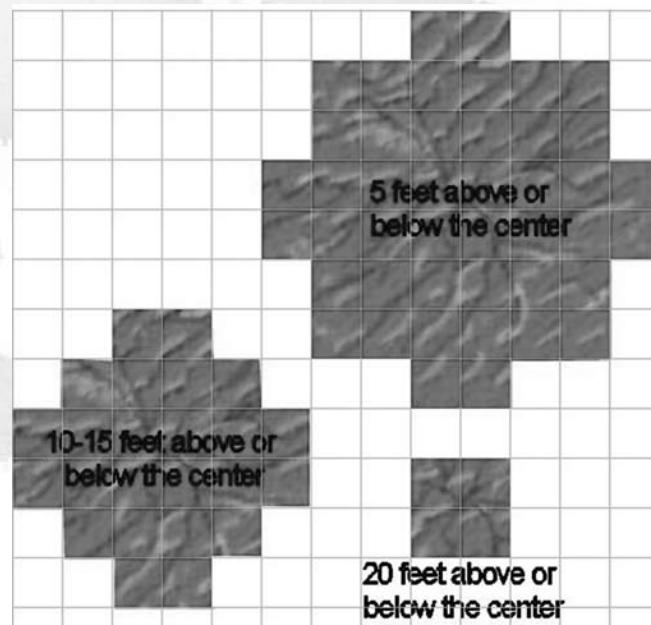
### When Playing the Numbers Makes You Lose

Your party is getting hammered. Your fighter is down to two hit points and is right next to a raging troll barbarian that's pretty close to full hit points. The cleric is still out of it—a victim of *hideous laughter*. The rogue ran away last round. You'd like to run away, but the troll is between you and the exit and all you've got left is *scorching ray*, *vampiric touch*, *magic missile*, and *phantasmal killer*. What are you going to do?

By the numbers, of course, you're going to lose. Nothing you can cast has even a 50% chance of killing the troll this round with average damage. If you could somehow survive long enough to cast all of your damaging spells, the troll will have regenerated enough hit points to still be alive. What you need is not averages; you need to get lucky.

While the *phantasmal killer* spell is not normally a good choice against a foe with a decent Will save and a good Fortitude save, it at least offers the chance for you to get lucky and win the battle this round. This is a useful lesson in less dire situations as well. While certain death situations are rare for whole parties or any particular character, it is not unusual for a single party member

### *Fireball* at different elevations



to be one round away from death. In the previous situation, the mage might be perfectly safe—protected by the rogue and cleric—but the fighter would still be likely to die if he went for the safe average damage against the troll.

The wizard's goal in that case would be to ensure that the fighter survives to shield him in the next fight not just to deal average damage to the troll. For that purpose, *phantasmal killer* is still a strong contender even though

it is a bit of a long shot. Long odds are better than no odds. A skilled player knows when to forget about the averages and swing for the fences.

## Using This Table

This table lists the average damage for a normal casting of the following spells. It doesn't adjust that average for the difficulty of the saving throw. It doesn't adjust that

Spell	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
burning hands (evocation, 1st)	3.5	7	10.5	14	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
Save	1.75	3.5	5.25	7	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	
shocking grasp (evocation, 1st)	3.5	7	10.5	14	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
magic missile (evocation, 1st)	3.5	3.5	7	7	10.5	10.5	14	14	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
acid arrow (conjuration, 2nd)			5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd	5/rnd								
flaming sphere (evocation, 2nd)			7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd								
scorching ray (evocation, 2nd)			14	14	14	14	28	28	28	28	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	
fireball (evocation, 3rd)					17.5	21	24.5	28	31.5	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	
Save					8.75	10.5	12.25	14	15.75	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
lightning bolt (evocation, 3rd)					17.5	21	24.5	28	31.5	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	
Save					8.75	10.5	12.25	14	15.75	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
vampiric touch (necromancy, 3rd)					7	10.5	10.5	14	14	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
ice storm (evocation, 4th)							17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
shout (evocation, 4th)							17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	
Save							8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	
cone of cold (evocation, 5th)								31.5	35	38.5	42	45.5	49	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	
Save								15.75	17.5	19.25	21	22.75	24.5	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	
chain lightning (Primary) (evocation, 6th)									38.5	42	45.5	49	52.5	56	59.5	63	66.5	70		
Save									19.25	21	22.75	24.5	26.25	28	29.75	31.5	33.25	35		
chain lightning (Secondary)									19.25	21	22.75	24.5	26.25	28	29.75	31.5	33.25	35		
Save									9.63	10.50	11.38	12.25	13.13	14.00	14.88	15.75	16.63	17.50		
acid fog (conjuration, 6th)									7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd	7/rnd		
disintegrate (transmutation, 6th)									77	84	91	98	105	112	119	126	133	140		
Save									17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5		
freezing sphere (evocation, 6th)									38.5	42	45.5	49	52.5	52.25	52.25	52.25	52.25	52.25		
Save									19.25	21	22.75	24.5	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25		
delayed blast fireball (evocation, 7th)										45.5	49	52.5	56	59.5	63	66.5	70			
Save										22.75	24.5	26.25	28	29.75	31.5	33.25	35			
mage's sword (evocation, 7th)										17/rnd										
incendiary cloud (conjuration, 8th)											14/rnd									
Save											7/rnd									
polar ray (evocation, 8th)											52.5	56	59.5	63	66.5	70				
shout, greater (evocation, 8th)											35	35	35	35	35	35	35			
Save											17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5			
sunburst (evocation, 8th)											21	21	21	21	21	21	21			
Save											10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5			

Spell	Caster Level																				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
vs. Undead, Oozes, Fungi, etc															52.5	56	59.5	63	66.5	70	
Save															26.25	28	29.75	31.5	33.25	35	
horrid wilting (necromancy, 8th)															52.5	56	59.5	63	66.5	70	
Save															26.25	28	29.75	31.5	33.25	35	
meteor swarm (evocation, 9th)																	84	84	84	84	
Empowered burning hands (3rd lvl slot)					26.25	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	
Empowered shocking grasp (3rd lvl slot)				26.25	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	
Empowered magic missile (3rd lvl slot)			15	15	20	20	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	
Empowered scorching ray (4th lvl slot)					42	42	42	42	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	
Empowered fireball (5th lvl slot)							47.25	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	
Empowered vampiric touch (5th lvl slot)							21	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	26.3	
Empowered cone of cold (7th lvl slot)													68.25	73.5	78.75	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5	78.5
Empowered chain lightning (8th lvl slot)															78.75	84	89.25	94.5	99.75	105	
Empowered secondary arcs															39.375	42	44.625	47.25	49.875	52.5	
Empowered disintegrate (8th lvl slot)															157.5	168	178.5	189	199.5	210	
Empowered delayed blast fireball (9th lvl slot)																	89.25	94.5	99.75	105	
Maximized burning hands (4th lvl slot)					30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	
Maximized shocking grasp (4th lvl slot)					30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	
Maximized magic missile (4th lvl slot)						20	20	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	
Maximized scorching ray (5th lvl slot)							48	48	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	
Maximized fireball (6th lvl slot)									60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	
Maximized vampiric touch (6th lvl slot)									30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	
Maximized cone of cold (8th lvl slot)															90	90	90	90	90	90	
Maximized chain lightning (9th lvl slot)																	102	108	114	120	
Maximized secondary arcs																	51	54	57	60	
Maximized disintegrate (9th lvl slot)																	204	216	228	240	
Empowered and Maximized scorching ray (7th lvl slot)															165	165	165	165	165	165	

average for the chance of making a touch attack. It is just the raw average damage from a given spell at any given caster level—and the average damage that the spell deals on a successful saving throw. It gives you a quick and easy way to determine which spells do the most damage at any given level.

For instance, a 5th-level sorcerer could look at this chart and determine that the most damage he can deal to a single target comes from an empowered *shocking grasp* spell. A 20th-level wizard might look at this chart to determine whether an empowered *delayed blast fireball* or a maximized *chain lightning* will give him more damage from his 9th-level spell slot. (He will find that the maximized *chain lightning* does more damage to its primary target but significantly less with its secondary arcs).

## Controllers

The controller's spells consist of anything that negatively affects an enemy's abilities, movement, morale, psychology or fighting capabilities. Direct damage is the realm of the blaster, while affecting the battlefield belongs to the saboteur. You want to hurt the enemy, degrade his capabilities, fray his nerves, and make him feel uncertain, afraid, depressed and overmatched. The vast majority of your spells fall into the enchantment and necromancy categories, and each of these schools has its own peculiarities, so we'll deal with them separately first, then look at how they compare and work together.

### The Uses of Enchantment

Enchantment spells are fairly easy to categorize and understand. Almost all of them are of the compulsion sub-school and have the [mind-affecting] descriptor. Almost all of them (with some useful exceptions that we'll discuss later) require Will saves, and by now you should have a good idea of how to enhance their DC to make enemy saves more difficult. These spells involve reducing an enemy's capabilities, forcing actions on him or preventing him from doing something.

#### Ounce of Prevention, Pound of Cure

Prevention spells include those that incapacitate a foe or limit his actions, such as *daze*, *sleep*, *binding*, *deep slumber*, *hideous laughter*, *power word stun* and the various *hold* spells. Spells that force actions on foes or make

them more inclined to follow your commands include *charm* spells, *hypnotism*, *suggestion* spells, *lesser geas*, *dominate* spells, *geas/quest* and *demand*.

Controllers also have a good range of spells that reduce an enemy's abilities and make him stupid, clumsy or more vulnerable to spells. These include *touch of idiocy*, *confusion*, *feeblemind*, *crushing despair*, *insanity*, *mind fog*, *insanity*, and *power word blind*.

Circumstances and foes will as always determine which spells are the best choices. In addition to their function, these spells are divided by target—most affect a single creature. If you expect to be facing larger numbers of foes, focus on spells that affect an area or group. Enchantment spells that affect multiple targets include *mass charm monster*, *confusion*, *crushing despair*, *deep slumber*, *mass hold monster*, *mass hold person*, *hypnotism*, *mind fog*, *sleep* and *mass suggestion*.

### More Monsters? No Problem

When facing multiple foes, the low-level controller has only two spells in his arsenal, but they're good, especially against the hordes of goblins and kobolds that always seem to lurk in low-level dungeons. *Sleep* is great for thinning out larger numbers of foes, and the effect is fixed—four HD of creatures have to make Will saves every time you cast it. *Hypnotism*, on the other hand, is an underutilized spell. It affects 2d4 HD of creatures—on average, one more than a *sleep* spell. Try to cast it quickly, however, since when cast in combat, your foes get a +2 bonus to their saves. Once affected, you can take your enemies out of combat as effectively as with *sleep* by giving simple commands like “run away!”

At higher levels, you've got more options against large numbers of enemies, and many common foes such as orcs, ogres and gnolls have poor Will saves, making them very vulnerable to *hold* or *confusion* spells. If you can, try to focus on spells such as *mass charm* or *suggestion*, since it's better to persuade foes to fight on your side for a time than to simply immobilize them or put them to sleep.

### Be Prepared

One of the keys to being a good mage is to think ahead, a virtue that is often sorely lacking among your warrior-minded comrades. Let's draw your attention to one of the most effective and least-used spells in your arsenal: *mind fog*. While it has no immediate spectacular effect, it is an enormous boon to those who use enchantment spells, especially controllers. Anyone in the fog who

fails his initial Will save takes a whopping penalty to Wisdom and all subsequent Will saves. The fog persists for 30 minutes and its effects remain for 2d6 rounds even after the target moves out. Anyone affected by the fog is going to be a sitting duck for your subsequent enchantment spells, and—if you’re lucky—many or all will be asleep, dazed, confused or incapable of defending themselves once your warriors reach them.

You’ve got a much bigger selection of spells that affect one target at a time, and if you use them right they can be as effective as your area-effect enchantments. These include the *charm* and *hold* spells, *daze* spells, *dominate* spells, *geas*, *hideous laughter*, *insanity*, *irresistible dance*, *suggestion*, *touch of idiocy* and *power words blind* and *stun*.

Initially, your choices are again limited. *Daze* and *charm person* are about all you get as a beginner, and it’s enough to force an opponent to run or attack his allies, or force him to stand around looking stupid while the warriors chop him down. If you’re a wizard controller, you’ll be relying on *daze*, *sleep* and *charm person* a lot to start with. Make sure you’ve got several instances memorized, or if you’re a sorcerer, get ready to cast the one or two you do know a lot. When casting control spells against a single target, a little *charm* will get you far, because it gives you the chance to turn an enemy against his fellows and make him an ally, at least for a short time.

Options improve as you get to higher levels. Spells like the *power words*, *irresistible dance* and *touch of idiocy* are great since they allow no saving throw, and the *power words* are universally effective against high hit point creatures. Be careful when facing beasties with spell resistance, however, so make sure you take the Spell Penetration feat when you start encountering such creatures regularly. Spells with a range of touch are hazardous. Your best bet is to get your familiar to deliver the touch, or use the necromantic spell *spectral hand* to deliver touch spells of level 4 and lower. Only wade in yourself as a last resort.

### Enemy Mine—Turning Enemies into Allies

Spells that control are nearly always preferable to spells that simply incapacitate. A troll who is *charmed* and persuaded to attack his fellows is preferable to a sleeping or immobilized troll. At higher levels, this becomes a huge advantage—*charm* or *dominate monster* can be used against the enemy’s more powerful creatures, sending a dragon or giant fleeing or forcing it to act as your ally. Though they still allow Will saves, the benefits of true control spells “hitting the mark” are invaluable.

*Lesser geas* is one of the better bargains, as you’ll be getting it at 7th or 8th level, you can cast it from range, it’s effective for 1 day/caster level, and—best of all—there’s no saving throw. It’s only effective against creatures with 7 or fewer HD, however, but that covers a lot of foes. Memorize this spell and use it to thoroughly disrupt an enemy attack.

Enchantment spells have one big weakness—they are all but useless against undead, which have natural immunity to mind-affecting magic. This is another good reason to keep a stock of necromancy spells on hand, and we’ll discuss those next.

### Learning to Love the Dead

The second most important school for a control specialist is the dark realm of necromancy. In fact, you can be a very effective controller with only spells from these two schools.

A controller shouldn’t skimp on necromantic spells. They have some pretty nasty effects, seriously degrade combat capabilities and, best of all, are effective against those nasty undead creatures that enchantment spells can’t touch. Necromancy spells don’t control a target’s actions (unless it’s undead, in which case you can’t do better), but they make your foes a lot more vulnerable to attack and are very effective when combined with the prowess of your warriors or other mage archetypes.

Note that many of these spells allow a Fortitude save—that’s one save that tends to be pretty hefty, especially among rough and tough warrior-type races. The other saves are Will-based, just like enchantment. Taking Spell Focus for both enchantment and necromancy would be a good idea.

Low level necromancy spells include *touch of fatigue*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *cause fear* and *disrupt undead*. Luckily, three of those four spells are touch attacks and fairly easy to hit with during combat. If you’re going to be equipping yourself with necromantic spells (and as a responsible controller, you’d better be, lest zombies devour your unwary cleric), make sure you’ve got a decent Dexterity, or at the very least don’t have to deal with a penalty for ranged touch attacks.

At higher levels, you’re going to be able to fatigue, scare, exhaust and paralyze your living foes, sometimes several at a time. Exhaustion and fatigue spells are great, because the effects are, at least for the purposes of the current combat, permanent. The victims take penalties to Dexterity and Strength, damaging the capabilities of both melee and ranged specialists as well as reducing their Armor Class. They can’t get rid of the penalties

until they rest (which your warriors won't let them do any time soon) or get magical aid (which would force enemy spellcasters to waste their time repairing the damage you've done instead of inflicting some of their own). That's a pretty good situation to be in for the good guys.

Whether to use fear-causing spells depends on the environment and what your warriors want to do. If you want your foes to flee, and don't mind them escaping to possibly recover and come back later, *cause fear* and *scare* are fine. If your warriors want to exterminate the threat and aren't too worried about return engagements, go ahead and hit them with spells that reduce their abilities instead.

## Other Schools

Though necromancy and enchantment contain the majority of a controller's spells, other schools have their place as well. Divination can be safely ignored, while schools such as conjuration provide one or two useful spells. In the case of conjuration, *grease* is an excellent way of limiting enemy mobility, while *trap the soul* is a fairly specialized spell that, if used correctly, can rid your party of a single powerful opponent. The spell is at its best if the enemy can be tricked into picking up an object that has been prepared in advance, but in general this spell is best left to more elaborate strategies, prepared well in advance. It has no practical use in the midst of combat, once swords have been drawn.

Evocation (*flare*, *shatter*, *force cage*, *prismatic spray*) likewise provides some useful spells, though only *force cage* provides notably greater effects than spells from other schools. Likewise, the illusion spells *color spray* and *hypnotic pattern* provide useful effects, but they're not indispensable to the well-stocked controller.

Abjuration and transmutation are also fairly specialized. The abjuration spells *dismissal* and *banishment* are especially effective if your foes are outsiders, or have summoned extraplanar creatures. Abjuration also provides effective magical defenses in *spell turning* and *mage's disjunction*. Transmutation is great if you want to turn your foes into statues (*flesh to stone*) or toads (*baleful polymorph*, *polymorph any object*). While these are potentially very useful, there are myriad controller spells from other schools competing for your precious spell slots.

# Saboteurs

You're going to be having a lot of fun. The saboteur's job is to wreck the battlefield — to turn the very terrain

against your enemies. Unlike some other archetypes, you're going to have to take a fairly thoughtful approach to battles; you're going to be doing a lot of preparing, setting ambushes, guarding and warding and the like, and you're going to be choosing spells that are geared to both the terrain and to the type of foe you anticipate facing.

Your spells have a wide range of effects, as we'll discuss in more detail below — they can warn you of approaching danger, restrict enemy movement, allow you to observe the battlefield, improve conditions for your side, and so on. Anything that changes actual battlefield conditions to your advantage or your enemy's detriment can be considered a sabotage spell. Further, it's important to keep in mind those spells that are of shorter duration and should be cast once combat has begun and those that last for a while. These latter spells can be cast before combat or, in some cases, as defensive measures on your camp or a defensible strong point.

This suggests that a saboteur should choose spells carefully. A wizard has the flexibility to choose spells from an ever-expanding spellbook, and can customize his arsenal based on the adventuring party's varying situation. In cities, you're not going to be making camp in the same fashion as when you're wilderness adventuring, so you'll want to focus on quick-response, short-term spells, or spells that are more effective in buildings or cities, while in the dark woods or trackless jungle, you'll be making camp each night and will need to set up ambushes, alarms and other spells that the enemy can trigger — obviously, these are going to be your longer-duration spells.

As always, when it comes to spell selection, sorcerers get the short end of the sabotage stick. Though you can cast these spells until the cows come home and don't have to worry about memorizing from bulky spellbooks, you're stuck with only a handful of known spells. *Guards and wards* is a great spell if you're defending the family villa against the local werewolf raiders, it's all but useless out in the wilds, and thus a poor selection for a sorcerer. In this case, pick spells that are going to have solid, fast effects and that you can cast multiple times. *Guards and wards* is rendered useless in a perilous mountain pass, but who cares about that if you can quickly hem your foes in with multiple *walls of fire*.

## Choose Your Weapons

You've got a wide range of missions that you can undertake as a saboteur. Though there are many different ways to categorize your spells, we'll be focusing on six major criteria: spells that mislead or conceal, spells that

warn or protect, spells that degrade or damage your enemy's abilities, spells that restrict or redirect enemy movement, spells that allow you to observe the enemy and the battlefield, and miscellaneous spells that can be used to enhance conditions for your side or damage them for the enemy. Here is our breakdown of these various spells and their vital statistics, followed by a discussion of how and when to use each one.

## Mislead/Conceal

This list is extensive, including *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *illusory wall*, *image spells*, *mirage arcane*, *shadow conjuration*, *veil*, *ventriloquism*, *darkness*, *fog cloud*, *obscure object* and *obscuring mist*. Most of these are illusion spells that you're going to be casting either during a battle or immediately before. They're good for persuading the enemy that they're facing greater numbers or confusing them with "attacks" from unexpected quarters. *Fog cloud*, *obscuring mist* and similar spells will keep your side concealed, and are often useful in association with illusions. *Hallucinatory terrain* is a real boon here, especially when you're camping in the wilderness — though it won't hide tents or other artificial structures, it can easily change the look of surrounding terrain to the extent that foes will avoid the vicinity. Also note that it has a good duration, and can easily last all day or all night.

*Shadow conjuration* is another underutilized spell that enables you to duplicate the support specialist's *summon* spells and other conjurations. In many cases you can get a lot of mileage out of these spells, once more persuading the enemy that they're under attack by summoned creatures, hopefully realizing only too late that they've been tricked.

## Warn/Protect

This list includes *alarm*, *antimagic field*, *globes of invulnerability*, *mage's faithful hound*, the *magic circle* spells, *magic mouth*, *refuge*, *screen*, and the various necromantic *symbols*.

Protection and warning spells tend to be a bit more long-lived than others — the many *symbol* spells actually last until some unfortunate foe triggers them. Prepping a battlefield with various *symbols* will throw the enemy into disarray, though this takes time and opportunity to prepare. Knowing a few support-style spells can prove incredibly useful. Spells such as *magic circles* don't last as long, but will easily outlast the duration of the average combat. If you expect to be facing specific alignments, have these spells on hand to aid your allies. Other spells such as *alarm* and *magic mouth* are rela-

tively low-level but effective warning spells. *Guards and wards*, though useful when inside a structure, is pretty specialized and less versatile than the other spells in this list.

## Degrade/Damage

These are fun ones — they mess up a foe's abilities, distract and frustrate him. They're all quick to cast and most can be cast from a relatively safe distance. Few actually do damage — an especially fun exception is *black tentacles*, which actually turns the terrain against your enemies. Other spells in this list include *dispel magic*, *hypnotic pattern*, *prismatic sphere* and *wall*, *rainbow*, *scintillating patterns* and *wind wall*.

## Observe

As a saboteur, you have to be aware of battlefield conditions. Having a few of these observation spells in your repertoire will be of considerable benefit, especially if some portions of the battlefield are out of your immediate vision, if you're planning an ambush, expecting attack, etc. The list is short — *arcane sight*, *discern location*, *prying eyes* and *scrying* — but in places where you can't easily scout the enemy, they may prove indispensable.

## Restrict/Redirect

Restriction of movement and maneuverability is a saboteur's specialty, and you'll always want to have hampering spells like *web*, *grease* and *slow* available. Don't forget the many uses of *arcane lock* and *hold portal*, especially in urban or dungeon environments. Other spells used to restrict or redirect your foes include *dimensional anchor*, *force cage*, *gust of wind*, *hold portal*, *maze*, *sleet storm*, *solid fog*, and the various *wall* spells.

## Miscellaneous Effects

These miscellaneous spells change the environment or give you some additional maneuvering room. Some of them, such as *control weather* and *move earth*, require some imagination and innovation to use effectively, but can be quite devastating — imagine undermining an enemy's position to pave the way for a missile or ranged magic attack by your blaster, or using *phase door* to take yourself and a beat-stick fighter directly to the enemy's flank without their knowledge. Other useful spells in this category include *daylight*, *stone shape*, *control water*, *continual flame* and *time stop*.

# Support Specialist

Selecting your spells as a support mage can be much trickier than with other roles for two main reasons. First, the “best” spells will depend heavily on your party composition—some spells are clearly better suited to a melee-centric group (*i.e.*, *bull’s strength*, *heroism* or *greater magic weapon*), while others provide greater benefit to a stealthy party (*i.e.*, *invisibility*, *cat’s grace* or *spider climb*). Second, the support specialist has a wider range of spells than any other archetype, making spell selection a challenging task, especially for sorcerers with limited known spells.

While a blaster can rest assured that *magic missile* and *scorching ray* will be useful in nearly any situation, a support mage doesn’t have that luxury. There certainly are valuable spells that will be used time and again, but to really make the most of your role as a support specialist, you need to cater to your party’s needs and playing style.

Furthermore, unlike other archetypes, exactly how the support mage goes about fulfilling his role can differ dramatically. Some of your spells will directly impact and improve your party’s offensive abilities, such as *bull’s strength* or *heroism*, while others improve your defense, like *protection from evil* or *displacement*. But there are also a variety of important support spells that don’t fit neatly into those categories.

Summoning spells are an excellent example—*summon monster* doesn’t directly impact a party member, but a summoned creature can make a big difference during combat by getting a few extra attacks in for your side, providing flanking opportunities for warriors and rogues and creating more “zones of control” to threaten opponents with attacks of opportunity. Spells that improve movement and maneuverability also make up an important portion of the support specialist’s repertoire—*jump*, *haste*, *fly* and *teleport* can all save your party precious time under the right circumstances, as well as increase party versatility and provide substantial benefits both in and out of combat.

To take a closer look at the types of spells best suited to your role as a support mage, we’ll break down the archetype area of expertise into four fields—defensive buffs, offensive buffs, mobility buffs and summoning. While it might be tempting to focus solely on one or two of these categories, a well rounded support mage will be able to provide benefits from several fields. And a well rounded support mage is a much more valuable asset to the party—you need to be able to shift gears on the fly should one of these support fields be unavailable based on the terrain, opponent or setting.

# Defensive Buffs

Under many circumstances, preventing damage is far more important than dishing it out. When your party is facing superior numbers and likely to suffer numerous attacks in a single round, it’s better to improve your party’s armor class and defense first than to improve your combat prowess. Similarly, whenever you’re facing creatures with debilitating attacks like poison or level drain, preventing damage is even more important. And finally, pesky creatures with concealment or incorporeal miss chances are better faced with a strong defense—why cast offensive buff spells which may still “miss” up to half the time and be rendered useless while your defensive spells will function fully?

## Improving AC

At early levels, *mage armor* is a solid deal, as the +4 armor bonus can benefit anyone wearing lighter armor, and provides its full bonus against those nasty incorporeal touch attacks since it’s a force effect. If you can predict the nature of your enemies, the *protection from alignment* spells are incredibly values, conferring a sizeable +2 deflection bonus to AC (which stacks with just about any low level gear) and a +2 resistance bonus to saves—the save bonus is less significant at higher levels, where more magic items and spells start to offer resistance bonuses. The secondary bonuses—protection from possession/mind control and preventing contact from summoned creatures of that alignment—helps provide a bit longer shelf life. And the *magic circle* versions of these spells helps more people with a single casting.

## Reducing Damage

For pure defense, *stoneskin* is a great spell to cast before sending your warriors into the thick of things, or as

### The Best All-Purpose Defensive Buff Spells by Level

1st—*mage armor*, *protection from alignment*, *shield*; 2nd—*blur*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *resist energy*; 3rd—*displacement*, *magic circle versus alignment*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*fire shield*, *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *stoneskin*; 5th—none. Time to stretch into another role or possibly use this slot for a metamagically enhanced version of another spell; 6th—*antimagic field*, *globe of invulnerability*; 7th—*statue*; 8th—*iron body*, *protection from spells*; 9th—none.

an emergency lifesaver to protect a wounded ally long enough to get out of harm's way. By the time a wizard can cast it, *stoneskin* will already last over an hour and absorb up to 70 hp worth of incoming damage. If you've got a group that revels in melee combat, you'll be casting *stoneskin* early and often. Even in a group relying on stealth and subtlety, access to *stoneskin* is handy to have around for emergencies. At higher levels, *statue* and *iron body* perform similar roles, but don't discharge regardless of the amount of damage absorbed.

Some picks are less obvious. *Protection from arrows* may seem like a tempting second-level spell to buff your party, but *blur* is generally a much better choice. Despite its shorter duration, *blur* provides its benefit against both melee and ranged combat, and spells that require touch attacks. *Protection from arrows* only provides damage reduction from ranged attacks, any sort of magic ranged weapon bypasses that damage reduction, and the spell discharges once a certain damage threshold is reached. Creative groups may even wrangle an ad hoc bonus from their GM for using *blur* out of combat, such as when trying to sneak undetected past the city guard. *Displacement* will become a staple of your defense buffs at higher levels, as the 50% chance to avoid incoming damage is far too significant to pass up without a good reason.

## Multi-Tasking

Don't overlook the great multi-taskers in the support mage's spell list, like *cat's grace*. Not only will it bump up your AC by +2, but you'll provide a boost to Reflex saves and ranged combat. While *heroism* and *greater heroism* may first be thought of as heavily biased toward offensive buffs, they offer considerable bonuses to saves, and that save bonus may be more useful than the offensive bonus against certain enemies. And *invisibility* is definitely a boon to stealth and movement, but your opponent can't hit what they can't see.

## Different Buffs for Different Baddies

Support mages can also tailor some of their defensive spells to the task at hand. *Resist energy* and *protection from energy* allow you to select which energy type to resist at the time you cast. *Fire shield* allows you to choose from several options when casting the spell, providing greater flexibility and several effects at once. And, of course, *polymorph* provides incredible versatility, which a creative support mage can use in limitless situations.

You've also got access to spells suited to protecting your group from enemy spellcasters. You generally want spells that can be useful in as wide a number of situ-

ations as possible, and protection from magic isn't an exception. Since having access to *globes of invulnerability*, *antimagic field* and *spell turning* can protect against countless magical effects and spells, their flexibility and utility provide excellent protection for your party.

## The More, The Merrier

Remember, the best buff spells are the ones that can provide a benefit to the most party members possible. The Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma boosting spells may be tempting, but only select them if they offer flexibility. If you choose *owl's wisdom*, and only one character in the party can take advantage of an improved Wisdom score for a class or special ability (such as a cleric's spell save DC) then it has extremely limited value and is a poor choice. On the other hand, a group with a cleric, paladin and you as a sorcerer would benefit greatly from *eagle's splendor*—to boost your spell DCs, the paladin's saves and lay on hands effect, and the cleric and paladin's ability to turn undead. Then this spell becomes incredibly versatile, and you can tailor your castings to the group's specific needs at the time.

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## Offensive Buffs

Luckily, selecting offensive buffs is a much more straightforward task. Since very few of your buffs will directly impact the damage capacity of a fellow mage, the focus of offensive buff spells is especially well suited to both ranged and melee warriors. The value of *bull's strength*, and eventually mass *bull's strength*, cannot be overstated. To see the level of impact that adding +2 to a warrior's "to hit" has on average weapon damage, you need to check out the *Power Gamer's 3.5 Warrior Strategy Guide*, the brothers-in-arms companion to this guide.

But to prove the point, let's look at one example. Your 3rd-level wizard travels with a 3rd-level fighter. The fighter has a Strength of 18, wields a greatsword with both hands, and has the option to use Power Attack. For a standard attack, the fighter has a total attack bonus of +7 (BAB +3, Strength bonus +4). On a successful hit, he'll inflict  $2d6+6$  damage, or an average of 13 hp of damage per hit. Once buffed with *bull's strength*, assuming the fighter converts 2 points of his attack bonus with Power Attack and retains the same +7 attack modifier, his damage jumps up to  $2d6+13$ , or an average of 20 hp of damage per hit—a 65% increase in damage output—and has the exact same chance to hit. Especially against lower level foes, that's an enormous advantage.

Needless to say, the staple of offensive buff spells starts with *bull's strength*, but there are plenty of useful spells to choose from. *Heroism* and *greater heroism* increase your attack roll, as well as saves, offering versatility and a bit of protection. *Magic weapon* and *greater magic weapon* will improve your attack and damage, as well as allow low level characters to bypass DR/magic early in their careers. *Haste* slightly increases attacks and AC, but getting an extra attack with a full-round action is a huge bonus—especially if the hasted target is already the recipient of other offensive buffs.

## Bigger Is Better

Some offensive buffs aren't as obvious. *Enlarge person* is a great way to boost a warrior's ability when there's room to accommodate a larger combatant. Sure, the warrior's Dexterity and AC drop slightly, and it's only a marginal +2 Strength bonus—but since it's a size bonus to Strength, it will stack with *bull's strength* or a barbarian's rage. The biggest advantage, though, is that the weapon wielded increases in size and inflicts more damage. In our example above of the fighter with the greatsword, if he's already buffed with *bull's strength* and you slap *enlarge person* on him the next round, he'll still be at +7 attack (the bonus for +2 Strength is offset by the -1 to hit penalty for size), but the greatsword now inflicts 3d6+14 damage for an average of 24.5 points of damage per hit. Not to mention your big beefy fighter now has a 10 foot reach to threaten his foes.

In general, offensive buff spells lack the flexibility that defensive buffs offer, but provide a significant improvement to your party's combat capabilities. They help you hit more often with greater accuracy and allow you to inflict more damage—so it's a more than fair tradeoff. When struggling to pick an offensive buff, select one that will benefit the most party members, or one that will stack with an already known offensive buff spell to reach even greater effects.

## The Best All-Purpose Offensive Buff Spells by Level

1st—*magic weapon*, *true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, *cat's grace*; 3rd—*greater magic weapon*, *haste*, *heroism*, *keen edge*; 4th—*mass enlarge person*; 5th—none. Time to stretch into another role or possibly use this slot for a metamagically enhanced version of another spell; 6th—*greater heroism*, *mass bull's strength*, *mass cat's grace*; 7th, 8th, 9th—none.

## Mobility Buffs

Improving your party's mobility is even more straightforward than offensive buffs. Your needs will vary based on the situation, but each of these spells offers flexibility and can often provide benefits both in and out of combat. Also, all your party members can fully benefit from the effects of your mobility buffs, unlike some offensive buffs which are clearly tailored to combat-oriented characters.

The purpose of the mobility buff is simple—offer your party a means to improve their movement, maneuverability, or ability to deal with/bypass difficult terrain. Aside from the many out-of-combat uses, a warrior with *haste* or a rogue with *spider climb* has much more freedom to maneuver into optimum positions during combat. And facing a flying creature is much easier for your melee machine when that melee machine can fly, too.

*Invisibility* deserves some special mention as one of the more flexible mobility buffs. It can let you bypass enemies through stealth, provide an excellent defensive bonus against foes flailing about to strike, or ensure flat-footed attacks for your party rogue. Be sure to have *invisibility* on hand to use as needed, it is one of the support mage's most prized spells.

For those mobility spells you don't think you'll need often—but will desperately want to have on hand when the right moment comes—invest in a wand or a few scrolls. A sorcerer may be reluctant to expend one of his precious spells known to pick up *spider climb*, but it's incredibly handy in the right situation.

## The Best All-Purpose Mobility Buff Spells by Level

1st—*expeditious retreat*, *jump*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *levitate*, *spider climb*; 3rd—*fly*, *haste*, *invisibility sphere*, *water breathing*; 4th—none. Time to stretch into another role or possibly use this slot for a metamagically enhanced version of another spell; 5th—*overland flight*, *teleport*; 6th—none; 7th—*greater teleport*; 8th—none; 9th—*freedom*, *time stop*.

## Summoning

Summoning may seem an odd inclusion for the support mage, but its flexibility and utility bear the mark of the support specialist. Support specialists may choose to

forgo summoning altogether, but summoning can be an incredibly valuable and powerful tool. If you opt to add summoning spells to your repertoire, be sure to invest in Spell Focus (conjuration) and Augment Summoning as soon as possible. While Spell Focus (conjuration) may seem like a wasted feat, Augment Summoning more than makes up for it, effectively imbuing every summoned creature with *bull's strength* and *bear's endurance*.

The advantages of the *summon* spells are many. Summoned creatures are not subject to spell resistance or saving throws, so they are hard to disrupt or cancel. Once summoned, a creature doesn't require concentration, so you can continue to fulfill your support role while your creature fights on. Adding extra combatants to your side of the battle provides you with a lot more options, as well as splitting your opponent's attention between multiple targets. If the skeletons start swinging at your summoned celestial badger, that means they're not swinging at your ranger or rogue. And not being targeted by an attack is the best defense there is. You can also tailor summoned creatures to the task at hand, selecting creatures with specific offensive or defensive traits suited for each individual combat.

There are a few decisions you'll need to make with each summoning, the most important being—do you summon a single creature of the highest level possible, or multiple creatures from a lower summoning list? This depends on the situation, but a general rule of thumb is if you're facing fewer opponents than there are members in your party, get the single most powerful creature you can, and use it as your proxy during combat. Otherwise, when facing superior numbers, level the field by summoning more creatures from lower levels. Remember, with Augment Summoning, each creature summoned gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength and Constitution, making even lower level creatures you summon much more powerful.

You need to put your strategy cap on when fielding your summoned creatures. And don't forget that they're expendable; you can be far more aggressive with your summoned creatures than you'd ever be yourself. Here are some important tactics to employ with your summoned creatures:

- 1) Never forget that summon spells have a range—you can summon creatures directly in the midst of your enemies or to key locations!
- 2) Advance them into the enemy's midst to absorb attacks of opportunity, letting your warriors move in with less risk.
- 3) Position them to provide flanking bonuses. In fact, if your group has multiple characters with

a sneak attack ability, summoning multiple weaker creatures to flank may be a better tactic against targets vulnerable to sneak attack.

- 4) Position them to create “zones of control” where opponents must suffer attacks of opportunity in order to reach vulnerable party members.
- 5) Send them after badly wounded targets, freeing up your heavy hitting combatants to face more dangerous foes.
- 6) Position them near enemy spellcasters, and have them ready actions to attack should the caster begin to cast a spell.
- 7) Position them to provide cover to fragile party members against enemy ranged or magic attacks.
- 8) Use them to attempt special attacks like trip, bull rush or disarm. Some summoned creatures may have a bonus to certain special attacks (*i.e.*, wolves have a bonus to trip opponents).

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## Cross-Archetype Spells

Many spells provide benefits to more than just one archetype, or can be used in different ways by the different archetypes. If you're looking to add some flexibility or fill out additional roles with your mage, here are some spells which may mesh well with a mage looking to make the most of his spell list across several archetypes.

### All Archetypes Should Know

Two spells in particular are very handy for all archetypes—*dispel magic* and *break enchantment*. Both are abjuration spells, a school a support specialist may be tempted to specialize in. If you're playing a blaster or controller wizard who banned abjuration, then there's nothing to do about it except make sure you have access to some scrolls with these vital spells.

When you're facing enemy spell casters or effects that can mimic a mage's impressive powers, it's awfully nice to have a quick means to cancel the effect. The last thing you want to do is face your party's *enlarged*, *bull strength*-enhanced raging barbarian compelled by an enemy's *dominate person* spell. And an enemy support specialist protecting the villain's front ranks with *resist*

*energy (fire)* makes it difficult for your blaster to take full advantage of his *fireballs* and *scorching rays*.

### Blaster/Controller

The role of blaster and controller can mesh quite well, especially when one archetype is chosen as a backup role to the other. A front-end blaster can take advantage of his investment in Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot by filling out his spell list with additional ranged touch attack spells like *ray of enfeeblement* (which has no save) and *ray of exhaustion* (Fortitude save for partial) to provide a quick means to weaken powerful foes and provide versatility to a blaster. Meanwhile, *enervation* and *energy drain* add negative levels to a target, and thereby lower the target's saving throws—making them more susceptible to a back-end blaster's save-based damage spells.

### Blaster/Saboteur

*Wall of ice* and *wall of fire* both have dual roles, to shape the battlefield and inflict a bit of damage, and can also fit nicely into each archetype's repertoire. And of all the various *hand* spells, *crushing hand* inflicts the most damage as well as offering some flexibility in its application. This might be tempting to a blaster looking for a few multi-purpose spells, while still allowing a saboteur to block or redirect enemy movement.

While there are very few illusion spells that directly benefit a blaster, *phantasmal killer* and *weird* are notable exceptions—especially if the mage has taken Spell Focus (illusion) to improve his other illusory sabotage spells. Even if a target isn't killed outright by *phantasmal killer* or *weird*, it will take some minor damage, and possibly suffer Strength loss from *weird*. At the very least, these two spells offer damage dealing potential to a saboteur.

### Blaster/Support

The blaster has fewer core spells attached to his archetype than any other role—but there are other ways to inflict damage directly, such as summoning creatures. The *summon* spells are incredibly versatile and can be used in a variety of situations. And at higher levels, the damage inflicted by summoned creatures can be significant—especially when you take into account the strategic opportunities they may present for other members of your party (flanking for rogue sneak attacks, for example). If you've already learned all the pure blast-happy spells you can get your hands on, picking up a *summon* spell or two will serve you—and your party—quite well.

For a front-end blaster, knowing *cat's grace* can help him land those touch attack damage spells, as well as providing a bit of protection with its AC and Reflex save boosts—and it offers some flexibility in buffing your party members.

### Controller/Saboteur

Some aspects of the controller's best spells like *hold monster* aren't far from certain spells a saboteur might employ to hinder enemy movement. The *hand* series of spells (*i.e.*, *interposing hand*, *grasping hand* and *crushing hand*) are well suited to both the saboteur and the controller, as they can impede, restrict and redirect enemies efficiently, as well as provide both archetypes with several options to use against incorporeal enemies.

*Resilient sphere* is another spell that can see a lot of use between controllers and saboteurs. A controller can lock away a powerful enemy or spellcaster inside a *resilient sphere* until the group is ready to deal with him and set up an optimal battle formation. Saboteurs will find *resilient sphere* useful in blocking enemy movement and formations. By targeting a creature in a pivotal position (such as the first orc trying to cross a narrow bridge or in tight quarters underground) the rest of your enemies will be stymied trying to move around the creature trapped inside the sphere.

And don't overlook the power of *mind fog*. Since it can cover a wide area (even if it doesn't have an exceptionally high save DC) it can force your opponent to make some difficult decisions when maneuvering, lest they risk becoming far more vulnerable to subsequent spells you cast.

### Saboteur/Support

Several excellent spells provide an opportunity to mesh these two roles. *Antimagic field*, *globes of invulnerability* and the various *protection from alignment* or *magic circle against alignment* spells both offer protection (as a support role) and can help limit opponent choices or funnel them in particular directions (as a saboteur role).

Further, the *summon* series of spells are listed as support spells, but could easily be put to excellent use by a saboteur. A saboteur can use summoned creatures to restrict movement, refocus enemy efforts or "herd" enemies where he wants them. And like many of the saboteur's other spells, *summon* spells aren't subject to spell resistance or saving throws.

## Chapter Seven

# Equipment

All characters start their career with one set of clothes, and wizards start with a spellbook, but everything else is up to you. As you adventure, your mage will gain treasure and will have to choose what to do with it. It is likely that the majority of NPC adventurers spend their money on drunken debauchery, but last night's revelry at the beer garden won't help your mage face down a lich or defeat the devilish traps in an ancient tomb. The NPCs who do spent their gain on that drunken debauchery eventually find themselves relying on a *potion of cure light wounds* for healing when their enemies are casting *harm*. In order to avoid their fate, you will want to get the most out of each gold piece.

### How to Get Your Equipment

The first thing to realize is that all of your treasure doesn't come in the form of gold. Remember that a character can usually only sell something for half its listed price. So if you slay the gnoll chieftain and find his *cloak of resistance +1*, you could sell it for 500 gp (half the list price for the item). On the other hand, if you keep it, you're only giving up 500 gp, even though it would cost you 1,000 gp to buy one. In effect, assuming your party insists on sharing treasure evenly, you can buy any found item at half price. This is important to keep in mind when kitting out your mage.

Here's another example: at full price *luck blade* with no wishes is a better deal than a *stone of good luck*. However, if you find the *stone* on the body of an enemy, it's a much better decision to keep the *stone of good luck* instead of selling it for 10,000 gp and spending another 12,000 gold to buy the *luckblade*. If your GM or campaign allows for more varied selling prices, based on haggling or item scarcity, the value of these items may fluctuate, but this provides a good rule of thumb.

The importance of found treasure as opposed to purchased items drives home another point. Everything is going to be campaign dependent to some degree or other. In a campaign where the GM likes to stock his monsters with *+1 keen falchions*, then *mithral bucklers of moderate fortification* are a lot more valuable than a campaign where

the GM sticks to claws and bites. Similarly, in a campaign where magic cannot easily be bought and sold, this chapter will serve a different purpose than in a campaign that features interplanar bazaars where efreeti exchange *robes of the archmagi* and *ioun stones* over smoking cups of coffee.

As a mage, however, you can create items with the right feats and, even if no magic items are ever bought or sold, you can still exercise a good deal of control over your array of equipment, or "kit" as we'll refer to it here. Furthermore, GMs might be amenable to the concept if you role-play out some of your searches. Bind a djinn with *planar binding* and commission it to negotiate a deal with the lords of the elemental plane of air. Or you could issue a *sending* letting another noted mage or weaponsmith know that you wish to commission a special item from him. You may not get everything you want, but it's worth the attempt.

### Storing Your Wealth

In some d20 games, your character can have thousands of gold pieces available at a moment's notice and they never weigh anything and never get stolen. In other games, however, securing and managing your hoard is important. In such games, you will have to deal with weight. With most mages' Strength, a dozen pounds is a serious encumbrance and, since 50 coins weigh one pound, that's just 600 gold pieces. There are several ways around this. Magical storage—*handy haversacks* and *bags of holding*—is an option at higher levels. At lower levels, platinum coins and gems offer a much more concentrated form of wealth. Since diamonds and diamond dust are components for several important spells—including *raise dead*, *resurrection*, *stoneskin*, and *restoration*—they are a particularly attractive way to store wealth. No matter what your level, however, it's a good idea to keep a half dozen coins of each variety handy. The bartender may not be able to make change for a platinum and he might decide to pad your bill if he sees you tossing that kind of money around. Similarly, you'll want to bribe beggars with coppers or silver—pay them too much and you'll stand out. But you've still got that platinum available for when you *do* want to stand out.

## Basic Adventuring Gear

Exactly how much ordinary gear you pack with you will depend upon your Strength. A mage with an 8 Strength will often have to do without some basics. A mage with a 10 Strength will be able to carry a bit more. Starting with the basics: clothes. An explorer's outfit is pretty standard. You might consider a monk's outfit, however, if you want to mislead your opponents. The gig will be up as soon as you unleash your arcane might, but it could prevent the enemy from focusing all their firepower on your mage during the surprise round. Cold weather gear should be your choice during winter or in any cold climate.

A backpack is the next essential item. You'll need somewhere to store your spellbook and rations. At least two days' rations are also essential. It won't do to starve because you didn't pack enough food. Unless you have darkvision, you'll also want a light source. Torches are cheap but a hooded or bullseye lantern is much better. They can be set down and their fuel doubles as a weapon. A light hammer, a piton, and 50 feet of knotted silk rope should complete the basic gear.

For alchemical gear, you should also pack at least one tanglefoot bag and two vials of antitoxin. Tanglefoot bags are valuable—the chance to reduce your foes' movement, attacks, AC, and Reflex save while sticking them to the ground is easily worth the 50 gold. Antitoxin is valuable to boost your weak Fortitude saves against poison. You should carry two vials so that you can use one if you're entering a dangerous situation (like a room filled with giant spider webs) and still have one left in case you need to deal with secondary saves in an encounter that surprises you later. On the other hand, alchemist's fire is a marginal purchase for a mage. The money would be better spent on a *scroll of magic missile*.

## Spells with Expensive Material Components

While not exactly equipment, regularly casting spells with expensive material components will definitely put a dent in your equipment budget. How much is too much and how can you reduce that cost?

The first step towards reducing the cost of expensive material components is to charge characters for them. Now the cleric probably doesn't charge for casting cure spells and you don't want him to start so you need to avoid sounding mercenary in your presentation. One strategy is to simply make it available. "I know *stoneskin* and I can cast it on you if you want, but it's a rather expensive spell, so if you want it cast routinely, you'll need to help provide the material components.

On the other hand, Mr. Warrior, if you pass me the diamond dust, I will cast it on you." This strategy has the advantage of displacing the cost of the spell onto the characters using it. It has the disadvantage of subjecting your spell list to your companions' wills and expense account.

Another strategy would be to ask the party to consider it a party expense. It's in everyone's interest to have a tough warrior out front taking the hits, so if everyone contributes a bit of cash, *stoneskin* can become a routine part of the warrior's strategy. This displaces the majority of the spell's cost and leaves you a little more freedom in what you prepare and when you cast, but not as much freedom as simply paying for the components yourself and deciding when to cast the spell.

These strategies work well for *stoneskin* which can be cast on other characters. They also works well for *identify* or for defraying the cost of an *analyze dweomer* focus. After all, everyone needs their items identified and it's cheaper to pay your costs than to pay for an NPC's costs and time. It does not work nearly so well for spells like *true seeing* that can only be cast on yourself, and whose benefit to the rest of the party is difficult to quantify. Thus, you will always have to exercise restraint in both preparing and casting

How do you know when such a spell is worth preparing or casting? The easiest spell to quantify is *stoneskin* and the principles used in evaluating when it is wise to cast *stoneskin* may be extrapolated to other spells. *Stoneskin* has one purpose: to prevent damage. This is useful in several situations. If you are in a moderately time-sensitive situation (where you can take a minute or two to heal but cannot spend a day to rest and regain spells) with limited healing capacity, *stoneskin* prevents you from expending your limited healing resources. In a normal environment, the alternative to *stoneskin* in such a situation would be a *wand of cure light wounds*. Since *stoneskin* costs 250 gp and a charge from the wand costs 15 gp to heal an average of 5.5 hit points, *stoneskin* will only save money when it prevents 90 hit points of damage or more.

However, damage is not simply a matter of marking charges off of a *wand of cure light wounds* after the battle. If you take too much damage at any point during the battle, you will die or fall unconscious. When characters are in danger of death and a cleric is unable to heal them, they will frequently fall back and drink a potion. Since *potions of cure moderate wounds* cost 300 gp and *potions of cure serious wounds* cost 750 gp, *stoneskin* is a good deal every time it keeps a character from drinking two *potions of cure moderate wounds* and it's worth the money if it keeps a character from drinking a *potion of cure serious wounds* even once every three castings.

There are, of course, other ways to protect characters—*displacement* for instance is one level lower and has no expensive material components—but a support mage should be using those as standard operating procedure. If *displacement* is enough to keep a character's cure consumption down to one *potion of cure moderate wounds* per dungeon, then *stoneskin* is a bad deal. On the other hand, if even with *displacement* or other protections a character uses a *potion of cure serious wounds* more than once every three times you might otherwise cast *stoneskin*, then *stoneskin* is a good deal.

Applying this principle to other spells with expensive material components, it is reasonable to say that one should only cast such spells when they are likely to cost less than other alternatives. If a successful Spellcraft check will identify a potion, it's a bad idea to cast *identify*. If *see invisibility* will let you target the imp, it's a waste to cast *true seeing*. If *wall of force* will keep the iron golems from attacking, *forcecage* is unnecessary. Of course there will be times when there's no other way to get the effect you want, but there are plenty of times when cheaper spells will be more efficient. The next logical step is for a wizard to avoid preparing such spells unless you think it likely to be a good deal to cast one and for a sorcerer to avoid learning such spells unless it is very frequently a good deal to cast them.

## Consumables

Lots of treasure comes in the form of limited use items—a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, a *wand of fireballs*, or a *staff of power* all fall into this category. All such items have a limited number of uses before they are rendered useless. Are they a good deal? If so, which consumables are the best deal and when should you use them?

In general, all consumables have to offer a better bang for the gold piece than a non-consumable item in order to be worth having. If they didn't, characters would sell them and buy the non-consumable item. Consumable items can offer this value in several ways.

First, they can offer more power than is available in a non-consumable item. This is particularly true at low levels. A first-level mage can't drop most major villains in a single action, but a caster level 9 *scroll of magic missile* is an ace in the hole that is far more effective than

any permanent item a low-level mage can get for 225 gp. Similarly, a *wand of magic missiles* enables a mage to pour a near-continuous stream of magic missiles (175 hp worth of damage if you've fifty rounds to spend). By comparison, a first-level *pearl of power* can only power one extra *magic missile*.

Second, consumables can offer something that is not available in permanent form. Since most mages won't have access to a *ring of regeneration* for quite some time, the most common form of curative magic available is consumable.

Third, consumables may offer an ability that isn't worth its cost in permanent form. While some characters may send messages enough that a *figurine of wondrous power: silver raven* is worthwhile, most characters don't need to do so very often and will find a *feather token: bird* to be sufficient for the few eventualities that do actually come up.

Finally, consumables may offer a more efficient way of achieving an effect. Using *wands of keen edge*, for instance, is cheaper than a *scabbard of keen edges* until you have used seventy-one total charges. Even *scrolls of keen edge* are cheaper than the scabbard until you use forty-three of them. Similarly, *scrolls of see invisibility* are cheaper than a 30,000 gp *lantern of revealing* until you've read 200 of them.

Implicit in all of this is the principle that consumables are meant to be used. If they are never used, they don't do you any good. It may be a while before you need to use the *scroll of glitterdust*, but if you're not willing to use it when the right situation shows up, you'd be better off with a bag of gold coins. At least that's useful as a makeshift sap.

So, if consumables can be so good, why is it that most characters want permanent items? Consumables do have several drawbacks. For the most part, consumables take an action to use while many permanent items are always on. No warrior wants to have to spend a round putting a 50 gp vial of *oil of magic weapon* on his longsword when he's being mauled by a fiendish dire ape. He wants a magic sword instead, even though a +1 *longsword* costs as much as 40 applications of the magic oil.

Similarly, no mage wants to spend his first round reading a scroll of *fox's cunning* to boost the save DCs of his

### What Makes a Consumable Valuable?

1. More potent than a non-consumable versions of same effect
2. Flexibility to offer something otherwise not available
3. Alternative to expensive/unnecessary permanent power

spells. Even if it costs more than 100 times as much, a *headband of intellect +4* is a better way to go since it enables the wizard to cast a boosted-DC spell in the first round of combat. Characters also operate on a threshold when using consumable items. A warrior-mage might read a *scroll of keen edge* before kicking in the front door of a dungeon, but he's unlikely to read it because the guy at the other end of the bar looked at him funny. On the other hand, a *scabbard of keen edges* is already paid for, so the warrior-mage might just activate it whenever someone looks at him funny. After all, he'll still get his three uses tomorrow no matter how many times he uses the scabbard today.

## Scrolls

Every mage should carry a supply of scrolls. Wizards gain Scribe Scroll as a bonus feat at 1st level and scrolls provide a good way to contribute in situations when you did not prepare the right spell or you've run out of spells. For sorcerers, scrolls are a means of expanding their capacity beyond their rather limited list of known spells, and low level sorcerers eventually expend their spell slots, too.

So what spells should you carry on scrolls? There are several criteria:

1. Carry scrolls that are very useful in unusual situations. *Command undead* is a good example of this. Unintelligent undead do not get a save against it so you can automatically assume control of even a Gargantuan skeleton with the spell. However, in a lot of cases, you don't know you'll be running into undead, so you wouldn't have prepared it since it's useless against everything else. At low levels, *magic weapon* is another example of this kind of a spell. Your warrior allies probably won't have magic weapons, so when you face something with DR/magic, you can help them a lot with the 25 gp scroll. On the other hand, early in your career you won't usually face creatures with DR/magic, so it's not a good spell to prepare all the time.
2. Wizards should carry scrolls of spells you usually prepare in limited quantities that can be vital in certain situations. *Fly* is a good example of this kind of spell. In some situations (for instance, when you're being attacked by flying creatures with reach and Flyby Attack or when the enemy attacks you from a high ledge in the cave), *fly* is vital. However, if you're a wizard, there's a good chance that you only prepared one *fly* spell—and just your luck, you had to use it to get away from the ghouls on the last level.

3. Sorcerers should carry scrolls of spells that can be important but that they don't know. To use the previous example, a lot of mid level sorcerers will pass by *fly* in order to get *haste* or *fireball*. However, *fly* is still an important tactical option and a scroll means that the sorcerer will have that option when he most needs it.

4. Carry scrolls of spells you won't use all the time. As soon as you go through 30 scrolls, you've paid as much as you would have paid for a wand. Sometimes—especially at low levels—you don't have a choice since you can afford a couple scrolls but can neither find nor afford a wand. In that case, scrolls are the best you can do but don't mistake that for the best there is or carry on the practice of using the same scroll regularly.

5. Since scrolls always use the minimum DC possible for a spell of their level, the best spells to scribe into scrolls are those that don't even offer a chance to save. And the next best kind have a significant effect even if the target successfully saves.

## Potions

Potions are like scrolls that anybody can use. As a mage, you can read a lot of scrolls, so why would you want potions? Potions have three advantages over scrolls:

1. You don't need to have the spell on your spell list. Most mages will need potions to activate cleric or druid spells by themselves.
2. Potions always take a standard action to drink while scrolls take the casting time of the spell. Thus even a mage who could read a *scroll of lesser restoration* will often be better off with a potion. The scroll takes too long to be useful during combat.
3. Potions are slightly less vulnerable. They can be used in an area of magical silence or while blind. They don't suffer from arcane spell failure. Potions don't risk being damaged if you go out in the rain.

The most important potions for most mages are potions of healing magic—and that's important enough for its own section. However, *potions of lesser restoration* are also quite valuable because they eliminate all temporary Strength penalties as well as fatigue—effects that are quite common at all levels due to magic like *touch of fatigue*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *ray of exhaustion*, *waves of fatigue*, and *blasphemy*.

## Wands and Staffs

Wands and staffs fill the same arcane role. They're consumable items that can last through several adventures and enable a mage to use a spell repeatedly. You need to have the spell on your spell list to use it; whether it's in a wand or a staff, they require spell completion to use. Since neither class of items suffers from arcane spell failure, they are both good choices for armor-wearing mages. Where wands and staffs are different is in their cost and what kind of spells they are good for. Since low-level wands are inexpensive, it is a good idea to buy quite a few to take care of your various detection and utility needs. This function is useful to the majority of mages. Staffs, on the other hand, are primarily useful for pumping out high powered offensive spells—certainly that's what the staffs in the DMG are built for. The latter function is primarily useful in a campaign where you have to face multiple combats in the same day and regularly run out of spells.

Wand/Scroll DCs	
Spell Level	DC
1	11
2	13
3	14
4	16
5	17
6	19
7	20
8	22
9	23

Wands, like scrolls, always use the minimum DC for a spell of that level. This means that an opponent will generally make the saving throw against a spell from a wand. Staffs, on the other hand, use the wielder's caster level, stats, and feats to determine their save DC. Thus a 15th-level mage with Greater Spell Focus (evocation) and Greater Spell Penetration, and a 24 Intelligence thanks to his *headband of intellect +6*, will roll 1d20+19 to penetrate spell resistance with a DC 22 10d6 *fireball* from a *staff of fire*.

## The *Staff of Power*

The *staff of power* is unique among the standard staffs, not only because of its broad range of powers, but also because it has a +2 enhancement bonus and confers a +2 luck bonus to AC and saves—a rare bonus descriptor that will stack with virtually anything. Its retributive strike ability won't help you win the game as much as it lets you take others with you when you're losing, so it shouldn't figure prominently in its analysis if you're playing to win. The +2 enhancement bonus is easy to price at 8,000 gp. The bonuses to AC and saves are not easy to evaluate since the *staff of power* is the only way to get a luck bonus to AC or more than a +1 luck bonus to saves. Even so, at a high estimate, they would only be worth 100,000 gp together, which still leaves its cost per charge over 2,000 gp. If you go for a *staff of power*, you're saying that the versatility offered by its long list of powers is worth that premium.

By comparison, that same mage would only roll 1d20+5 to penetrate spell resistance with a DC 14 5d6 *fireball* from a basic *wand of fireballs*. It's obvious that wands and staffs are useful for different kinds of spells.

Mage Staffs: Cost per Charge

Name	Cost	Per Charge	One Charge Spell
Charming	16,500	330	<i>charm person</i>
Fire	17,750	355	<i>fireball</i>
Size Alteration	29,000	580	<i>enlarge person, mass</i>
Illumination	48,250	965	<i>dancing lights</i>
Frost	56,250	1,125	<i>wall of ice</i>
Abjuration	65,000	1,300	<i>dispel magic</i>
Conjuration	65,000	1,300	<i>stinking cloud</i>
Enchantment	65,000	1,300	<i>suggestion</i>
Evocation	65,000	1,300	<i>fireball</i>
Illusion	65,000	1,300	<i>major image</i>
Necromancy	65,000	1,300	<i>halt undead</i>
Transmutation	65,000	1,300	<i>blink</i>
Divination	73,500	1,470	<i>tongues</i>
Earth and Stone	80,500	1,610	<i>passwall</i>
Passage	170,500	3,410	<i>passwall</i>
Power	211,000	4,220	<i>fireball</i>

Wand: Cost per Charge at Minimum Caster Level

Level	Cost	Per Charge
1	750	15
2	4,500	90
3	11,250	225
4	21,000	420

Good wand spells are spells that you will cast over and over again, that do not have saves, and that are effective at minimum caster level. *Enervation* is a good example of such a spell. It is useful to cast repeatedly in one day or even in one combat. It deals 1d4 negative levels regardless of caster level and does not allow a save. *True strike*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect secret doors*, *light*, *unseen servant*, and *shield* are also examples of good wand spells. Neither *magic missile* nor *ray of enfeeblement* are ideal wand spells since they are significantly more useful at higher caster levels, but they are still adequate choices since neither allows a save and both are effective over a range of levels. *Fireball* is not a good wand spell. However, since it has some effect even on a successful save, it is still a better choice than *hold person*.

Most staffs allow you to cast more than one spell. Good spells to look for in a staff will benefit from increased caster level and may very well have saving throws—but that's okay since you'll be using your mage's abilities to fuel those save DCs. The *staff of frost*, for instance, is a relatively weak staff since only its *cone of cold* power really benefits from either the improved DC or improved caster level allowed by a staff—and *cone of cold* is a two-charge power which means that using it costs twice as much as a scroll. The *staff of fire*, on the other hand, is a good deal since it offers mid to high level mages caster level 10 fireballs with high DCs at a lower cost than a caster level 10 *wand of fireballs*. Among standard staffs, the *staff of fire* is the only one that stands out as a good deal—all other staffs make you pay a premium to use your statistics and feats with the spells inside.

## Healing

Sooner or later every mage will need healing. No matter how careful you are, an enemy archer will penetrate your *protection from arrows* with a magic arrow or a rival mage will catch you in a *fireball*. The party cleric may or may not be there to heal you. In fact, your party may not even have a cleric. (In the cleric-less party, however, you need to be a *lot* more careful than in a party with a cleric). Maybe it's after the battle and the cleric is either out of spells or needs to conserve some spells for the final confrontation. Either way, you'll need some healing magic.

When discussing healing magic, it is important to distinguish between combat healing and after-combat healing. In combat, the amount of hit points you can heal per round is important. When you're down to 5 hp, an average of 5.5 points of healing won't save you from a 30 hit point *fireball*. 18.5 hit points of healing will. On the other hand, when combat is over, there's generally

no downside to healing more slowly. For after-combat healing, minimizing the cost is important.

The most efficient magic item for healing is the humble *wand of cure light wounds*. At 15 gp a charge, it's less than 1/3 the price of *potions of cure light wounds* and just over half the price of a *scroll of cure light wounds*. Items of *cure moderate wounds* cost six times as much as their *cure light wounds* counterparts for roughly double the healing. When you can't or won't heal up with the cleric's spells, a *wand of cure light wounds* is the way to go. Even if you can't use it, it's likely that there is at least one party member who can. And if there isn't, you can purchase a few ranks of Use Magic Device so you can try.

Healing Efficiency and Effectiveness		
Item	GP/HP	HP/Round
Scroll CLW	4.55	5.5
Scroll CMW	12.50	12
Scroll CSW	20.27	18.5
Scroll CCW	28.00	25
Potion CLW	9.09	5.5
Potion CMW	25.00	12
Potion CSW	40.54	18.5
Wand CLW	2.73	5.5
Wand CMW	7.50	12
Wand CSW	12.16	18.5
Wand CCW	16.80	25

*Pearls of power* are another option for after-combat healing. Though they are not primarily a healing item, any time that another healing spell would be more valuable than the spells you could recover with the pearl, you can loan the pearl to a cleric or druid to restore a healing spell.

Sometimes, however, you need something that you can use yourself. If you're counting on the cleric to use your *wand of cure light wounds*, it won't do you any good when the cleric goes down. If you go down and the fighter is the only one close enough to get to you, you want something he can use too. A *potion of cure light wounds* is the best thing for this purpose. You should always carry one for emergencies. You may not need more than one, but you do need one.

But when the enemy hits you with a lightning bolt for 30 out of your 35 hit points, you will want something more than 1d8+1 healing and you can't always count on the cleric being nearby. You'll want to carry one of the most powerful curative potions you can afford for situations like that. At most levels, that will be a *potion of cure serious wounds*. One is all you're likely to need, but you want something for such situations.

## Permanent Magic Items

Permanent magic items, unlike consumables, are never used up. They may be limited to a number of charges per day, but are never completely drained. You can use a *metamagic rod of quickening* three times a day every day for a year and it will still work every day the next year. They are often passive items that just work without taking any of your actions—and they should form the bulk of your equipment budget.

### Defense: AC

Veterans of the game expect their mages to wear *bracers of armor*. Unfortunately, they no longer offer a good value. In order to get the same benefit as the *mage armor* spell, a mage needs 16,000 gp to buy +4 *bracers of armor*. By the time that is even close to affordable, the mage could buy two first-level *pearls of power* for 2000 gp and simply keep *mage armor* up all day. The other 14,000 gp could go to buy a +3 *cloak of resistance* and a +2 *amulet of health*. The more expensive *bracers of armor* are cost-prohibitive at 25,000 gp for +5 *bracers*, 36,000 gp for +6 *bracers*, 49,000 gp for +7 *bracers*, etc. At high levels, you may decide that it's worth the cost simply because there's no way to get what the best *bracers* offer, but, since there are alternatives, the low and mid-level *bracers of armor* are not worth the price.

*Rings of protection* are another mainstay. At high levels, they may even be worth it. After all, they are always on and it's difficult for mages to acquire deflection bonuses higher than +2 through spells. (Clerics can cast *holy aura* or *dispel evil* for a +4 deflection bonus but the duration of both spells is rather short and neither are on the sorcerer/wizard spell list). At mid levels, however, a mage can cast *magic circle against evil* and keep the duration long enough to last an entire dungeon crawl. Even if it isn't always on, it's a good deal cheaper than a *ring of protection+2*.

*Amulets of natural armor* are great items. Their only problem: they compete for the neck slot. An *amulet of health* also fills the neck slot and grants a mage bonus hit points and a bonus to Fortitude saves as well as Concentration. If you're focusing on armor class, the *amulet of natural armor* is the item for you, but if your mage wants to stay out of combat, you're better off with the *amulet of health*. Hit points help against ranged attacks and area effect spells, and mages tend to be favorite targets for foes with abilities that require Fortitude saves.

A cheap and easy alternative is the mithral buckler. A mithral buckler has no arcane spell failure or armor

check penalty and consequently a mage can wield one without suffering any non-proficiency penalties. The basic mithral buckler grants an unimpressive +1 shield bonus, but its value quickly becomes apparent when you add magic to it. For the same 49,000 gp as +7 *bracers of armor*, you can buy a +4 moderate fortification *mithral buckler*. That would grant a +5 shield bonus to AC and a 75% chance to negate critical hits and sneak attacks—and you could still cast *mage armor* on top of that.

If you don't use a mithral buckler, a *monk's belt* will give you the AC bonus of a 5th-level monk (+1) as well as an unarmed strike that deals 1d8 damage. If your GM is particularly generous or gullible, he may interpret the "AC and unarmed damage of a 5th-level monk" to include the monk's Wisdom bonus to AC. In that case, you can get good use out of any Wisdom bonuses you may have.

What about normal armors and shields? Is arcane spell failure worth it? That assumes a character is proficient. Non-proficient characters also suffer the armor's armor check penalty to all attack and skill rolls. Of course, with leather armor, masterwork studded leather, and mithral chain shirts, that is no more of a problem than it is for the mithral buckler; they don't have an armor check penalty. So, what about arcane spell failure? For most mages, any arcane spell failure is too much.

Between spell resistance, spell immunity, and saving throws, there are already enough ways for spells to fail. Since most of a mage's contribution to combat will be through spells, any chance of failure is too much. On the other hand, a warrior-mage may make his primary contribution through weapon damage and there are a number of spells without somatic components or which have a long enough duration to cast before putting on the armor and thus avoiding arcane spell failure. *True strike*, *displacement* and *dimension door* are examples of spells without somatic components, while *false life* and *greater magic weapon* are primary examples of long duration spells. The Still Spell feat is also an option. If a mage applies Still Spell to every spell in his arsenal, it turns out that he effectively has the spells per day of a mage two levels lower. However, since there are long duration spells and no-somatic spells, and the Still Spell user still has the two caster levels for level-dependent effects, it's not quite as bad as it may appear. It also has the added benefit of making all of your spells available when grappled. Making extensive use of Still Spell is an expensive proposition, but allows the use of the heaviest armor and even a tower shield without risking arcane spell failure.

For characters who do decide to endure arcane spell failure, however, there are two sweet spots. The mithral

chain shirt has only 10% arcane spell failure and offers a +4 armor bonus with a +6 maximum Dexterity bonus for a potential total of +10 to AC. A suit of mithral full plate has an arcane spell failure of 25% and offers a +8 armor bonus with +3 max Dexterity bonus. *Celestial armor* has a +8 armor bonus (including the +3 enhancement) and a +8 max Dexterity bonus with only a 15% arcane spell failure. Of all these armors, *celestial armor* offers the same total armor class as +5 *mithral full plate*, but it requires a Dexterity of 26 instead of 16 to properly take advantage of it.

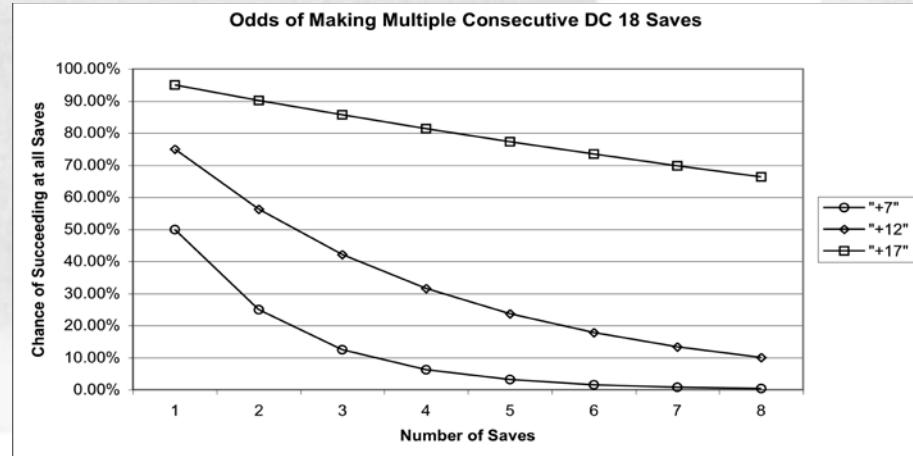
The mithral chain shirt offers a 5% reduction in spell failure and a total armor class only one point less and requires less Dexterity to take full advantage of its benefits. Since it takes a lot of effort and expenditure to get to a 26 Dexterity and losing one spell in ten is much better than losing one spell in four, the mithral chain shirt is the armor of choice among wizards who are willing to gamble with arcane spell failure.

## Defense: Saves

Mages generally live and die by the DCs of their saving throws. This is just as true defensively as it is offensively. A 10th-level mage with a DC 17 *baleful polymorph* won't give his enemies nightmares about being turned into newts. On the other hand, a 10th-level mage with a measly +3 Fortitude save will have nightmares about his enemies turning him into a newt, instead.

Your save bonuses can never be too high. Consider that through the course of any given adventure, you will have to make quite a few saves. Fail some of them and nothing particularly bad will happen. Fail others, and you'll be mildly inconvenienced. Fail the wrong ones, and you're in dire peril. Then there are those nasty situations where a failed save will kill you.

The higher level you get, the more saving throws fall into the latter categories. If you want to avoid paying the exorbitant costs of *raise dead* and *resurrection*, you'll need to make all of the "save or die" saving throws and you'll need to make most of the "dire peril" variety, as well. The problem is that it's much harder to make all of your saving throws than it is to make just one. A 75% chance of making any given saving throw seems like pretty good odds initially, but it only adds up to a little bit more than a 50/50 chance of making two saving throws in a row. Looking at the chart, you can see that nine out of ten characters with a 75% chance of making their saving throws will die by the time they've been in eight save-or-die situations.



In order to survive, your character doesn't need to make just two vital saving throws in a row; he needs to make every single saving throw in a life or death situation — situations which are quite common in d20.

So, what can you do about your saving throws? The most basic item is a *cloak of resistance*. As magic items go, it is relatively inexpensive and makes a dramatic difference in any character's saving throws. Unfortunately for sorcerers, it uses the same slot as a *cloak of charisma*. Consequently, sorcerers will either need to be extra careful, make use of alternate Charisma enhancers like *ioun stones* and the *rod of splendor*, or find alternate sources of resistance bonuses to saving throws like *magic circle against evil* and the *robes of the archmagi*.

Statistic enhancing items also benefit saving throws. *Gloves of dexterity* boost Reflex saves as well as initiative, armor class, skills, and ranged attacks. An *amulet of health* boosts Fortitude saves as well as hit points and Concentration. A *periapt of wisdom* boosts Will saves but uses the same slot as the *amulet of health*. In general, Constitution is more important to a mage than Wisdom, but if you decide to go with the periapt or a different amulet item, a *belt of dwarvenkind* offers a +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution as well as a +2 resistance bonus to all saves against poison, spells and spell-like effects. The only more efficient way to increase your saves is a *cloak of resistance*.

A *stone of good luck* is expensive, but it also boosts all of your saves (and skills, etc). A *luckblade* (without wishes) is an even better deal. Though it doesn't offer a bonus to skill checks, it offers a luck bonus to saving throws and allows you to re-roll a bad saving throw. It doesn't even require proficiency or that you actually wield it — all you have to do is carry it around. Having a +2 *shortsword* around if you ever need one is icing on the cake. A *staff of power* grants a +2 luck bonus to saves, but it is a good deal more expensive than the *luckblade* and has enough other functions that it needs to be evaluated by itself.

Effect of a Re-roll	
Chance of saving	Chance of saving with a re-roll
25.00%	43.75%
50.00%	75.00%
75.00%	93.75%
90.00%	99.00%
95.00%	99.75%

At high levels, you may want to add even more to your saves. A *pale green ioun stone* is another item that can add to your saves (and stacks with nearly everything else). It also grants a bonus to attack rolls, skill and ability checks.

## Spell-casting Ability

*Robes of the Archmagi* are cool. As they say, the clothes make the man. Such robes are, however, astoundingly expensive. Are they worth it? They grant a +4 resistance bonus to saves, a +5 armor bonus, SR 18, and a +2 bonus to spell resistance checks. The resistance bonus could be had in a cloak for 16,000 gp. The armor would cost 25,000 gp in bracer form. The SR could be had from a mantle, but by the time you can afford *robes of the archmagi*, SR 18 won't stop any spell from a worthy opponent but is still useful for taking the edge off being targeted by wands or groups of low-level mages. So, the selling points are the bonus to overcome spell resistance, having all of the abilities in one package, and the cool label. Both those abilities are more useful for sorcerers than for wizards. Sorcerers can wear a *robe of the archmagi* with a *cloak of charisma* +6 and gain the resistance bonus to saves — something that is otherwise quite difficult for them to manage. Since sorcerers have fewer feats than wizards over their career, the opportunity cost of the Spell Penetration feats is higher for them and therefore anything that fulfills the same function is also more valuable.

Chance of beating SR: 18th-level caster		SR Value				
		25	28	30	32	34
Spell Penetration		80%	60%	50%	40%	30%
Greater Spell Penetration		90%	75%	65%	55%	45%
GSP and robes of the archmagi		100%	85%	75%	65%	55%

## Stat-Boosting Items

The most important stat for any mage is his primary spellcasting stat. A wizard with a 24 Intelligence is simply better than a wizard with a 16 Intelligence. A

higher spellcasting statistic gives you more spells per day and higher DCs on the spells you do have. Nearly every wizard should have a *headband of intellect* — and as good a headband as he can afford. The only exception to this rule is highly focused front-end blaster mage. A front-end blaster mage who limits his other roles to buffing and sabotage can make do with a stat-booster that is merely sufficient to grant him a bonus spell of the highest spell level he can cast. Thus, he can afford to both purchase and upgrade the item slightly later than other wizards and may choose to spend the money saved on better *gloves of dexterity* to aid in delivering those ranged touch attacks.

For sorcerers, the choice is somewhat more complicated. *Cloaks of charisma* are just as useful for sorcerers as headbands are for wizards, but they take up the same item slot as a *cloak of resistance* — also a vital item. Sorcerers have several options. At low levels, they can live dangerously and try to stay within a *magic circle against evil* as much as possible or cast *heroism* to boost their saves. Doing so enables them to wear a *cloak of charisma*. At high levels, such a sorcerer might hope to find a *robe of the archmagi* for a +4 resistance bonus to saves. Alternately, a sorcerer can live without a *cloak of charisma* for a while and make do with a *pink and green ioun stone* for a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma when he can afford it. A sorcerer who chooses this route may eventually want to trade the *ioun stone* to the cleric and pick up a *rod of splendor* for the +4 enhancement bonus to Charisma as well as some fancy jewelry and other fluff.

Mages will also want to improve their Dexterity and Constitution. *Gloves of dexterity* and an *amulet of health* are the cheapest ways to do this, but *ioun stones* and the *belt of dwarvenkind* are also effective, if limited, ways to improve your other stats. Unless you are some kind of a warrior-mage, you probably won't do much with a *belt of giant strength*.

At higher levels, you will have the opportunity to use *wish* spells or magic tomes to gain inherent bonuses to your stats. What's the most efficient way to do it? If you don't want to spend XP, your only option is to buy a tome. If you're willing to spend XP, however, you could craft tomes, or cast *wishes* as well. The table below shows the XP costs of each inherent bonus when casting *wish* spells, crafting tomes, or simply crafting other items until you've saved enough money to buy the tome outright (the last option requires crafting twice the gold piece value of the tome since you only save 50% of an item's gp value by crafting).

XP Cost for Inherent Bonuses			
Bonus	Wish	Tome	Crafting
+1	5000	5100	2200
+2	10000	10200	4400
+3	15000	15300	6600
+4	20000	20400	8800
+5	25000	25500	11000

As you can see, crafting other items and simply using the money you save to buy the tome you want is, by far, the most XP-efficient way to gain an inherent bonus. When you consider that it is also possible much earlier than any other method—since you don't need to be able to cast *wish* to craft magic items or buy a tome—it is clearly the best method to gain an inherent bonus.

## Pearls of Power

*Pearls of Power* are a great deal for wizards. Since sorcerers don't prepare spells, they have no use for them, but several pearls of power can give a wizard the sorcerer's ability to cast spell after spell without worrying about running out of spells later in the day. They are also versatile. Since they work for any spellcaster who prepares spells and don't take an item slot, you can loan a cleric or druid a *pearl of power* when you need healing. In some cases, *pearls of power* can actually save two spells. If you are ambushed in the middle of the night, ordinarily, you won't be able to prepare spells until eight hours afterward—and divine spellcasters who chose to pray for their spells in the morning may not be able to recover any spells they cast in the night at all. However, if you use a *pearl of power* to recover the spell, it will be ready in the morning and you will be able to use the pearl again on the next day.

## Metamagic rods

Metamagic rods are, quite simply, some of the most useful items a mage can get. They fill vastly different functions, however, so it is worth dealing with them separately.

**Empower Spell:** In bang for the buck, this is one of the best rods. From levels 1-10, it will be an invaluable addition to your repertoire. The ability to empower spells that you would not otherwise be able to empower changes the function of damage dealing spells from dropping foes into Cleave range for your warriors to simply dropping them yourself. Unfortunately, the lesser rod is limited to third-level spells so, by 12th level or so, the rod is beginning to run out of steam. At that point, an empowered *fireball* or *lightning bolt* is no

longer the most impressive spell you can cast and, in a few more levels, a lesser rod may find itself relegated to empowering your daily *false life* and being loaned to the cleric to make cure spells more effective. A normal *rod of empower spell* has a less severe drop off in utility; it ceases to be as dramatically effective by level 15 when you could cast empowered sixth-level spells without the rod if you wanted to. The greater rod will allow you to do more damage than is normally possible by empowering *horrid wilting* or *meteor swarm*.

**Enlarge Spell:** In rod form, this is actually almost worthwhile. Every now and then you want a bit of extra range and for 3,000 gp a lesser rod will let your *ray of enfeeblement* or *magic missile* go a lot further. Those situations are few and far between in most games, but when you have 200,000 gp worth of gear, it might be worth a few thousand to be prepared for those contingencies.

**Extend Spell:** For a mage on a budget, this is the rod to get. Even a *lesser rod of extend spell* doesn't fade in usefulness but actually grows more useful over time. By 20th level, a lesser rod will allow you to nearly double the amount of weapons you keep enhanced with *greater magic weapon* since the extended version will last nearly two days, enabling you to keep two weapons enhanced at the cost of one spell slot per day. Similarly, it will enable a single *see invisibility* to last nearly a full day of travel—changing it from a spell that you can keep active through a small dungeon to a spell you can keep active in general. *Heroism* and *magic circle against evil* benefit similarly from the rod. A normal rod would apply to *stoneskin*, *mnemonic enhancer*, *detect scrying*, *false vision*, *overland flight*, and *contingency*. A major rod is pricey, but could be used to keep *mind blank* on an entire party of four at the cost of two spell slots per day. It could also extend extremely long-duration effects like *dimensional lock*.

**Maximize:** this rod fills the same function as a rod of empower but is more expensive and usually more effective. You get what you pay for—or what you can find and afford. Once you find it, use it judiciously, and revel in your newfound power.

**Quicken:** this is an extremely effective rod, and serves—even more than empower or maximize rods—to enable a mage to do what would otherwise be impossible outside of epic levels. Even a normal rod will enable you, at 11th level, to do something that a 20th-level mage can't do: quicken a 6th-level spell. The major version enables the quickening of 9th-level spells. You pay for that ability, but it is well worth the price.

**Silent:** this is an item for contingencies. If you happen to get caught in the area of a *silence* spell and you can't

get out, what will you do? Either sit around and wait or pull out your *metamagic rod of silent spell*, that's what. By mid levels, 3000 gp isn't too much to spend in preparation for that contingency and it can be used to cast low-level spells when you want to be sneaky too. As it happens, *dispel magic* is 3rd level, so a lesser rod will enable you to try dispelling the *silence*. At higher levels, *dispel magic* loses a bit of its bite so you might want to invest in a normal rod so that you can invoke a *greater dispelling*.

## Miscellaneous

These items don't fit readily into any category, but are important or noteworthy.

### Bag of Tricks

The *tan bag of tricks* is one of the most powerful magic items available for its 6,300 gp price. Until level nine or ten, you won't be able to summon something as good as you usually get from the bag — and the bag is a standard action that doesn't cost a spell slot. If you can find one, it dramatically increases the power of your party until you hit double digit levels where its usefulness will gradually taper off.

### Blessed Book

The *blessed book* costs 12,500 gp to buy and 6,250 gp to make. It holds 1000 levels of spells and a wizard does not have to pay in order to scribe spells into it. For many wizards, it sounds like a dream come true. If you were to fill it all up with new spells, it would save your mage 87,500 gp in spell ink and a lot of backaches from carting around a library of normal spellbooks. However, many wizards will not fill it entirely. In order to break even monetarily, a wizard must scribe 125 spell levels into it. Until that point, a wizard is paying for the convenience of having a small and waterproof spellbook.

### Handy Haversack

The *handy haversack* is one of the best general utility items available at 2000 gp. It enables you to store far more items than your weak Strength would usually allow. If you need to carry equipment for a long expedition, you can put nearly everything you think you might need in a *handy haversack*. 40 days of food? Piece of cake. It also serves as an organizer for your wand, scroll, and potion collection. If you have a dozen wands of first-level utility spells and thirty scrolls, your GM may

well ask how exactly you find the scroll of *command undead* that's been sitting unused for three levels when you finally come across the right situation to spring it on him. Whenever you reach into a *handy haversack*, however, the item you want is always on top. It even prevents the attack of opportunity that normally comes with retrieving a stored item. *Bags of holding* offer the same kind of mass storage, but weigh more (the smallest weighs in at 15 lb.), cost more, and don't offer the convenience of a *handy haversack*.

### Horn of Goodness and Evil

At 6,500 gp, this is a steal — especially for sorcerers who may want to have the mid-term buffing power of magic circle but balk at spending a known spell on it.

### Ring of Counterspells

The *ring of counterspells* is a steal at 4,000 gp, and offers a mage the opportunity to protect himself against several dangerous eventualities. For a mage who uses lots of long-duration spells, *dispel magic* (and later *dispel magic, greater*) are excellent choices and will neutralize a targeted (though not an area) dispel. For a mage who suspects he might face another mage, *nightmare* is useful as a counterspell to ensure restful sleep and *feeblemind* is also a good spell to protect against.

### Ring of Wizardry

There is no doubt that the *ring of wizardry* is a powerful item, but it costs too much to be recommended to a true power gamer. 20,000 gp would buy four extra spell slots on a *ring of wizardry I*, but it would buy twenty 1st-level *pearls of power*. It's a slightly better deal for sorcerers who get more out of it than wizards and can't use *pearls of power*, but sorcerers aren't likely to run out of spell slots anyway.

### Ring of Spell Storing, Vibrant Purple Ioun Stone

These items can be tremendously useful or downright dull depending upon how you use them. If you use them to store spells for a rainy day, then they're just overpriced *pearls of power*. You can buy two 3rd-level *pearls of power* for the cost of a *minor ring of spell storing* and four for the cost of the *ioun stone*. What makes them worth the money is the other things they enable you to do. If you convince the cleric to cast spells into them, you can have a curative spell like *cure serious wounds* or *heal* or a buff spell like *divine power* at your disposal. Similarly, these items can be used to bypass

the personal range restriction of handy spells like *shield*, *alter self*, *blink*, and *overland flight* to the party fighter or rogue.

## Sample Mage Kits

Let's take a quick look at the best possible starting gear—or “kits”—for a few mages at different levels. By applying the principles outlined in this chapter, even a relatively low level mage can dramatically improve his arcane abilities with a few choice pieces of gear. The gold piece budget for each of the kits is based on the DMG’s tables on higher level PC starting wealth. These kits show a wizard and sorcerer at different stages in their respective careers—5th, 10th and 15th levels. For each level, we present a generic kit which can be customized by archetype using the guidelines immediately following the kit description.

### Level 5

#### Wizard (9,000 gp)

*headband of intellect +2* (4,000)  
*cloak of resistance +1* (1,000)  
3 *1st-level pearls of power* (1000 each)  
*potion of cure moderate wounds* (300)  
*potion of cure light wounds* (50)  
*scroll of see invisibility* (150)  
*scroll of comprehend languages* (25)  
*scroll of hold portal* (25)  
4 *scrolls of shield* (25 each)  
*tanglefoot bag* (25)  
75 gp in coin and weapons

#### FRONT-END BLASTER

Replace the *headband of intellect* with *gloves of dexterity*; drop one *pearl of power* for a *wand of ray of enfeeblement* and a few extra *potions of cure light wounds*

#### SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Replace the *headband of intellect* with a *metamagic rod of extend (lesser)* and another *pearl of power*

#### Sorcerer (9,000 gp)

*cloak of charisma +2* (4,000)  
*handy haversack* (2000)  
*mithral buckler +1* (2015)  
*potion of cure moderate wounds* (300)

*potion of cure light wounds* (50)  
*scroll of see invisibility* (150)  
*scroll of comprehend languages* (25)  
*scroll of hold portal* (25)  
4 *scrolls of mage armor* (25 each)  
*tanglefoot bag* (25)  
75 gp in coin and weapons

#### FRONT-END BLASTER

Replace the *cloak of charisma* with *gloves of dexterity*

#### SABOTAGE AND SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Replace the *cloak of charisma* with a *metamagic rod of extend (lesser)* and 1000 gp of scrolls.

### Level 10

#### Wizard (49,000 gp)

*headband of intellect +4* (16,000)  
*cloak of resistance +4* (16,000)  
*amulet of health +2* (4,000)  
*rod of metamagic maximize (lesser)* (14,000)  
*potion, scroll, and wand collection* (1,000)

#### FRONT-END BLASTER

Reduce the *cloak of resistance* to +3, and buy a *wand of ray of enfeeblement* and *gloves of dexterity +2* with the difference.

#### CONTROLLER

*headband of intellect +6* (36,000)  
*cloak of resistance +3* (9,000)  
*handy haversack* (2,000)  
*potion, scroll, and wand collection* (2,000)

#### SABOTAGE OR SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Substitute two *metamagic rods of extend (lesser)*, a 2nd-level *pearl of power*, and four 1st-level *pearls of power* for the *metamagic rod of maximize (lesser)*

#### Sorcerer (49,000 gp)

*rod of splendor* (25,000)  
*cloak of resistance +3* (9,000)  
*metamagic rod of empower (lesser)* (9,000)  
*amulet of health +2* (4,000)  
*potion, scroll, and wand collection* (2,000)

### **FRONT-END BLASTER**

Substitute *gloves of dexterity +2* for the *amulet of health +2*

### **CONTROLLER**

Drop the *metamagic rod of empower (lesser)* to upgrade the *cloak of resistance* to +4 and buy a *handy haversack*

### **SABOTEUR**

Substitute a *metamagic rod of enlarge (lesser)*, and upgrade the *cloak of resistance* to +4, for the *metamagic rod of empower (lesser)* and 1000 gp of scrolls, wands, and potions

### **SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

Substitute three *metamagic rods of extend (lesser)* for the *metamagic rod of empower (lesser)*

## **Level 15**

### **Wizard (200,000 gp)**

*orange prism ioun stone* (30,000)  
*headband of intellect +6* (36,000)  
*amulet of health +2* (4,000)  
*cloak of resistance +5* (25,000)  
*luckblade with no wishes* (22,060)  
*metamagic rod of empower (greater)* (73,000)  
*metamagic rod of extend (lesser)* (3,000)  
*handy haversack* (2,000)  
potions, wands, and scroll collection (4,900)

### **FRONT-END BLASTER**

Substitute *gloves of dexterity +6* for the *orange prism ioun stone*

### **CONTROLLER AND SABOTEUR**

Substitute *metamagic rod of quicken (normal)* for the *metamagic rod of empower (greater)*

### **SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

Substitute *ring of spell storing*, a *stone of good luck*, and a *metamagic rod of quicken (lesser)* for the *metamagic rod of empower (greater)* and the *luckblade*

### **Sorcerer (200,000 gp)**

*robes of the archmagi* (75,000)  
*cloak of charisma +6* (36,000)  
*amulet of health +6* (36,000)  
*gloves of dexterity +4* (16,000)  
*metamagic rod of empower (normal)* 32,500  
*handy haversack* (2,000)  
potion, wand, and scroll collection (2,500)

### **FRONT-END BLASTER**

Substitute *gloves of dexterity +6* for the *amulet of health +6*

### **CONTROLLER AND SABOTEUR**

Substitute a *stone of good luck*, a *horn of fog*, and a *horn of goodness/evil* for the *metamagic rod of empower*.

### **SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

Substitute a *metamagic rod of extend (lesser)*, two *metamagic rods of extend (normal)*, and an expanded scroll and wand collection for the *metamagic rod of empower spell*.

# Chapter Eight

# Combat

**N**ow that you've properly equipped yourself and selected the best spells for your role, it's time to put everything you've learned to the test. While all the previous chapters have helped you fashion a potent mage crackling with arcane energy, all that time and knowledge is wasted if you bumble your way through combat like an overzealous fighter. They've got the hit points to outlive their mistakes—sometimes. You don't have that luxury.

To ensure your survival during combat, you'll need to approach combat from several perspectives. The more information you have about the battlefield, your opponents and your group's playing style, the more effective you'll be when you start slinging spells. The mage approach to combat includes the following steps:

- 1. Qualifying the Battlefield.** Where you're fighting can have as much of an impact on spell selection and effectiveness as any other factor.
- 2. Qualifying the Opponent.** Warriors have little to worry about other than their target's armor class and damage reduction. But a mage needs to take this into account along with factors such as energy resistance, spell resistance and strength of saving throws.
- 3. Create An Action Plan.** Once you've determined the best spells and the best approach, it's time to put it into action, and coordinate your efforts with the party to ensure success.

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## Qualifying the Battlefield

Your job is similar to that of the warrior, yet at the same time distinct. The warrior is going to look at the battlefield with an eye toward missile and melee combat—what are good locations for ambushes? Where is the enemy likely to be strongest? Where can we neutralize his strengths while improving ours? Likely locations for archers, defensive positions, choke points, hidden alcoves—all of these are a warrior's concern.

As the group's spell-lobber, you have to learn to see the same battlefield from a slightly different perspective. In some ways, both you and the warrior are concerned with the same things—clear fields of fire, for example, are useful to both archers and damage output specialists. But you've got other concerns. Where is a good place to cast *obscuring mist* to either cover your own party's advance or mislead the enemy? What is the best location to cast *rock to mud* or *grease*, to slow or stop an enemy advance? Where are the enemy spellcasters going to be, so that they can get clear shots at your party while minimizing the danger to themselves? A battle between well-equipped opponents can develop as intricately as a chess game, growing even more complex and challenging when the unpredictable forces of arcane magic are added to the equation.

There are, of course, a lot of spells that are going to be useful anywhere. The ever-popular *fireball* is going to work anywhere that isn't soaking wet or cramped where you risk injury to your own party. *Web* and *walls* will show up constantly, though they're no use against fliers. And you're always going to be eager to pump up your party with *haste* and *heroism*. The key is to find unique ways of using these spells that exploit battlefield conditions, preferably turning them against the enemy while at the same time defending your side.

No single volume is going to give you everything you need. In addition to this book, the aspiring mage and his companions should read through *The Art of War* and *A Book of Five Rings* if they want to be truly prepared. But we can hit some of the highlights. In this section we'll be dealing with typical battlefields, the ones that are near and dear to a GM's heart, as well as a couple of bizarre ones, to help show how original thinking and planning can turn a battle in your favor.

## The Dungeon

No setting is more beloved or more detested than the bloody, no-holds-barred dungeon fight. And many of the tactics used in dungeon fighting can also be applied to similar settings—the interiors of castles, winding canyons and even ancient forests with close-growing trees and narrow trails.

Every dungeon is going to be at least slightly different. There are several features that most dungeons and similar settings have in common, however, and here are a few of the better known ones, along with suggestions as to how to turn them to your advantage.

***Lighting:*** Either natural (sun/moonlight), artificial (torches/lamps) magical (*light* spells, *everburning torches*, etc.) or lack thereof (*darkness* spells or insufficient light). Use spells to either extinguish existing light or create light of your own to reveal enemies hiding in the shadows.

***Corridors:*** These are often the defining element of dungeon fighting, forcing combatants to focus on their ranks and generally drawing the most powerful warriors to the front. Magical tactics here are almost self-evident — *webs*, *walls*, hall-clearing *fireballs* and *cloudkills*. Don't limit yourself to what's been done before, however — cast a *wall of iron* behind the enemy fighters, cutting them off from their allies and allowing your own fighters to make short work of them. A *gust of wind* down a corridor is a quick and effective way to disrupt an enemy formation, even if they're Medium size.

***Doors:*** Common throughout the dungeon or castle, they can either be a way around the enemy or a way those enemies can outflank you. Don't let the enemy get the upper hand. The rogues can spike doors shut, but you can *arcane lock* them or block them with *webs*. Fighters can kick them open, but you can always *knock*. Use doors to your advantage, or prevent your foes from using them against you.

## MOUNTAINS

Mountains are made of rock. You learned that in school. In that case, you should stock up on *stone shape* to create defensive walls or doorways, *transmute rock to mud* to submerge your enemies in sticky goo, and possibly (if your GM's generous) *transmute mud to rock* to keep them there. *Fly* will enable you or your allies to easily navigate difficult terrain, outflank your enemies or avoid them entirely. *Shout* and *great shout* can bring down landslides or avalanches. There are lots of places to hide as well, so if you've got spells that allow you to strike concealed enemies such as *magic missile*, use 'em. Area effect spells like *acid fog* are good for ferreting enemies out of cracks and crevices.

## Snow/Ice

Extreme conditions can lead to extreme disaster. Don't just go after the enemy; protect your friends. Prepare *endure elements* to keep your party safe — if the enemy

is comfortable in the cold, they'll have an advantage that you'll have to counteract; if they're not, then keeping your allies safe from the cold will give you the edge. As in the mountains, a nice sonic spell like *shout* can shatter ice and collapse snow bridges or walls, and fire descriptor spells like *fireball* and *flaming sphere* can both inflict damage and utterly devastate surrounding terrain.

## DESERT/PLAINS

Those who dwell in the desert know how to use it. Combat here is often mounted and highly mobile or conducted from extreme range. Cold descriptor spells aren't as devastating here as fire spells are in the snow and ice — a *wall of ice* will start to melt immediately, and may end up making the enemy more comfortable. Here, fire is just as effective as ice, and *endure elements* is again going to give your side some advantages, especially if your enemy has fire spells. You're likely to have a clear field of fire in the desert as well, so line-of-sight spells like *lightning bolt* are going to be more effective than in restricted or cluttered terrain. Your real ally is the landscape — there's sand everywhere. Spells like *wind wall* are going to kick up lots of dust which aids in concealment, eliminating the need to cast spells like *obscuring mist*.

Plains have a lot in common with the desert. Once more, mobility is the key here. There's not a lot of terrain on a vast, grassy plain, so anything you can do to restrict enemy movement is going to play to your party's advantage. Note that this mobility means that your enemies can move around barriers, so if you're casting *walls*, make sure they're the kind that will encircle your foes. As in the desert, you're also likely to have clear lines of sight to the enemy, allowing you to lob missile spells more easily.

Illusion is going to be useful in both plains and deserts; more so than in restricted terrain. Your enemies are a lot more likely to see (and react to) an illusory attack from an unexpected direction in the open field than in a forest or the mountains, where your illusions may be harder to see.

## FOREST/JUNGLE

With restricted movement, lots of nifty hiding places, trees to climb and vines to swing on, forests and jungles are paradise for archers and rogues. You need to find ways to gain similar advantage. Simple spells like the *webs* and *walls* that serve you well elsewhere are even more effective here, especially when cast between trees. *Spider climb* enables you or your missile troops to scale trees with ease, setting up crossfire or ambushes.

Visibility is a key factor. Spells that obscure your side are far more effective here—casting *darkness*, *obscuring mist*, or *fog cloud* protects your warriors and confuses the enemy as to where all those arrows are coming from. You might also consider casting spells that will rob the enemy of cover—*gust of wind* can be used to knock leaves off trees, *cone of cold* can freeze and shatter them, and fire spells (though dangerous in a dry forest) can burn away cover, leaving the enemy vulnerable.

## Qualifying Opponents

You have to assess your foes with the same attention and consideration as you assess the battlefield—more, in fact. The warrior's job is easy. He's going to look at hit points, armor class, weapons, and how nasty and musclebound his foes look. You've got a few more considerations—saving throws, spell resistance, the ability to fling spells back in your face and other nasty surprises.

As you're facing the same creatures as your warriors, we'll be using the same creature categories as we did in *Warrior's Strategy Guide*. Spellcasters are going to have some special concerns, and these will be discussed by mage archetype.

## Critters

Critters include animals, magic beasts, oozes, plants and vermin. Their strength often derives from numbers, and they have a tendency to swarm individual targets, especially your front-line warriors. Your job is to prevent this—pare down their numbers before melee, slow 'em down, increase your warriors' mobility or make the enemy more vulnerable to missile fire so your archers can cut their numbers before they get into combat. Above all, stay out of the fray. If you avoid the front line, mindless critters will attack the guys with the bulky armor, leaving you free to do your job. If you

get too close, however, even relatively weak critters can spoil your whole day.

### Blaster

Use area spells if you've got 'em—you'll want to reduce enemy strength and keep them from ganging up on individual party members. Use touch attacks or targeted damage spells (like *magic missile*) to finish off badly wounded critters or to contribute against a single critter whether it is a solo fight or the last one standing. You will also want to use targeted damage on foes that have evasion or have no difficulty saving against your area effects. (Many advanced critters will fall into this category).

Touch attack spells are a tricky tactic. They bypass a critter's usually considerable natural armor bonus and delivering touch spells won't provoke attacks of opportunity (since you're considered "armed"), but exposing yourself to harm shouldn't be necessary against critters; let the warriors get in close and do the dirty work.

Persistent damage spells such as *flaming sphere* and *acid arrow* keep inflicting damage over time and allow you to take out those critters that survive your initial onslaught, while big spells like *fireball* and *lightning bolt* can either cut into enemy ranks or entirely remove the threat before it begins. Fire is a good for clearing webs and other obstructions critters may create.

### Controller

If you're dealing with creatures with an Intelligence score, you're in good shape. Cast spells that cause foes to leave or—better yet—force them to attack each other. There's strength in numbers, so if you can reduce them by hook or by crook your party will be better off. *Charm monster* will easily control one critter; compel it to attack an ally and—presto—two critters out of action at once, one soon to be dead and the other wounded. *Mass charm monster* is even better, and can cause a massive disruption among the enemy. *Cause fear*, *confusion* and the like have substantial effects on weak-minded and weak-willed creatures, causing critters to flee or wander

#### Critters

Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Animal	d8	Fort and Ref	Low-light vision, always neutral
Magical Beast	d10	Fort and Ref	Darkvision and low-light vision
Ooze	d10	None	Mindless, blind, immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, critical hits, flanking
Plants	d8	Fort	Low-light vision, immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, polymorph and stunning, immune to critical hits
Vermin	d8	Fort	Mindless, darkvision

randomly. This will help even the odds and prevent the critters from swarming your warriors.

Vermin, on the other hand, are mindless and immune to many of your prized enchantment spells. Use other spells such as *ray of enfeeblement* or *ghoul touch*. Use care with touch attacks, or use *spectral hand*. Stay well back and away from those gnashing mandibles.

### Saboteur

Your role is a lot like that of the control freak—slow the enemy, reduce his mobility, force individuals away from the group, hurt them if you can and above all else *stay out of melee*.

By now you know that your spellcasting doesn't rely on overcoming saving throws, so you can seed the battlefield with spells that slow, stop or damage those advancing critters—*web*, *grease*, *rock to mud*, *black tentacles*, *walls*, etc. Be careful if you cast *walls* or similar spells that you don't block your own party's line of sight and give the enemy an obstacle that they can use for shelter. And keep in mind that *walls* that cause damage are a lot more useful than walls that just sit there and look menacing.

Focus on the critters in the rear to prevent them from double-teaming your warriors, but don't cast spells that will restrict friendly movement should your party decide to pursue. Be aware of battlefield conditions and use terrain to your advantage, channeling enemy movement or splitting groups of creatures into smaller clusters that your warriors can defeat more easily.

### Support Specialist

The support specialist casts spells that enhance friends rather than hinder foes—in the case of critters, use spells that improve AC and mobility. *Cat's grace* is a very useful tool here because it increases AC, Reflex saves and ranged attack bonuses, all of which will be incredibly useful in combat, especially against critters. Give your warriors better movement with *haste*, allowing them to spread out so the critters can't bring superior numbers to bear. Also, increase your warrior's Strength and damage output (*bull's strength*, *magic weapon*) so they can plow through more foes per round.

Critters with special attacks often require Fortitude saves, so *bear's endurance* will help your combat types shrug off poison, as well as boosting hit points and giving your warriors a greater edge in combat. Your role here isn't like that of the glory-hungry (and possibly mentally unstable) blaster-types, but in the end it's every bit as important.

## Giant Ants

Giant ants are a great example of critters. A hive of these creatures can harbor up to a hundred workers, twenty soldiers and a single queen. In such large groups, these critters can be pretty nasty, with their grappling attacks and stings. An ant nest can be a death trap for an unwary party. On the upside, it's a target-rich environment.

### Blaster

At lower levels, you'll have to be content with picking off individual ants with *magic missile* or *scorching ray*. *Flaming sphere* will damage or kill one ant a round if you use it correctly, as you can continue to swap targets to finish off weakened opponents as needed. If you're higher level, *fireball* and other area effect spells are the way to go since vermin don't have very good Reflex saves.

### Controller

They're mindless and have low Will saves. Of course, they're immune to mind-affecting magic, so stick with the spells above—*ray of enfeeblement*, for example, or *ghoul touch* enhanced with *spectral hand*—and try to focus on weakening the most powerful targets like the soldiers and queen.

### Saboteur

Use every trick in the book to slow them down or stop them. Cast a *web*—or several if you're a sorcerer or wizard with multiple castings available. Follow it up with some *grease* and let the archers do their job on the oncoming giant ant horde. Mindless creatures are easy to fool with illusions, too, so use these to divert the group and give your missile troops more time.

### Support Specialist

If you have some time to whittle those ants down before melee, *cat's grace* can help your ranged combatants and boost their AC. If melee is unavoidable, buff up those front ranks with *bull's strength* to improve their chances of dropping a foe in a single round. Protective spells like *blur* and *displacement* are at their most effective when you're facing superior numbers—the more attacks made against a *displaced* target, the more likely some of those attacks will miss completely.

Fiends			
Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Dragon	d12	All	Darkvision and low-light vision, immune to magic sleep and paralysis
Elemental	d8	Varies	Darkvision, immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, critical hits and flanking; these creatures do not sleep, eat or breathe
Outsider	d8	All	Darkvision, extraplanar outsiders do not need to eat or sleep

## Fiends

Fiends are hard-hitting creatures, including elementals, dragons and outsiders. They generally have high hit points, good armor, multiple attacks and strong defenses. Many have spell resistance. Fiends will be among your greatest challenges. Big, nasty, dangerous, with tons of iterative and special attacks, fiends are also usually quite disinclined to negotiate, and will wade into combat with frail adventurers at the drop of a helmet. You'll be facing creatures with both spell and damage resistances, immunities, high saves and cunning, deadly intelligence. Fiends are tough nuts to crack, and require every resource in your bag of tricks.

That's not to say that fiends are without vulnerabilities—they're just a little harder to find. Among fiends, elementals have relatively low Will saves, and are more vulnerable to enchantment, the controller's specialty. Others may have immunities or resistance, but only to certain types of energy. Facing a fire resistant or immune foe? That's what *ice storm* and *cone of cold* are for. Spell-like abilities? Throw out a *dispel magic* and try to suppress them—at the very least you'll have the enemy worried and distracted as the warriors charge forward.

### Blaster

Fiends have lots of ways of avoiding taking damage. Dragons have huge Fortitude saves, followed closely by Will, coupled with immunities and spell resistance. Devils are all immune to fire and poison, as well as having good acid and cold resistance. Elementals are, unsurprisingly, immune to their own elements. And so on. You've got to know your foe, and how to get around its defenses. Hit fire elementals with cold descriptor spells, inflicting additional damage. Avoid acid attacks on black dragons, and so on.

If you don't immediately recognize a foe's resistances and vulnerabilities, try using a Knowledge (the planes) or similar check to get that precious information from your GM. You'll likely encounter very few monsters with any kind of sonic resistance, so spells like *shout* and *greater shout* are generally a safe bet to inflict some damage on an unknown fiend (though the sonic spells tend to deal less damage than other spells of their level).

Use spells that don't have a saving throw—*magic missile*, *ice storm*, *power words*, *scorching ray*, *vampiric touch*. Also, once you're of a level that can face fiends and other spell resistant creatures, Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration can give you an edge. Once you're of adequate level and have the right feats, spell resistance isn't the same obstacle it once was.

### Controller

Controlling fiends is a challenge—they're usually solitary, though occasionally they employ minions to keep themselves safe from foes, flinging hordes of lackeys into the fray, hoping to keep your warriors busy while they use their special attacks or spell-like abilities. Though their saving throws are all relatively high, they can still be subject to mind controlling effects such as *suggestion*, *charm* and *dominate*. Though the chances of success may not be great, especially against more powerful fiends, take the chance as soon as the opportunity presents itself. If you succeed, the battle may end before it ever begins. You can also even the odds a little with a spell like *mind fog* that will reduce the enemy's resistance to your enchantment spells.

Likewise, minions will be far more subject to control than their masters—should the local demon lord employ a crowd of goblins, *dominate* a bunch of them and use them to annoy the demon lord, giving your party a chance to attack and inflict damage.

Slowing or hindering the enemy's mobility is always useful, especially with fiends. Many are quite mobile—they're fast or can fly. And if they get in close they can start using iterative and special attacks to devastate your party. Even slowing a fiend down for a round or two with *slow* or *confusion* will have a significant impact, allowing missile fire and spellcasters to inflict more damage, or mounted warriors to make devastating ride-by attacks.

### Saboteur

Again, your job is similar to that of a controller, though with different methods. A well-placed *web* might slow a fiend down for a round or so, while a *wall* will cause it to plow through, possibly taking damage, or go around,

forcing it to make full moves and depriving it of full attacks. Concealing your side with spells like *darkness*, *fog cloud* and *obscuring mist* will force the enemy to search, further reducing his mobility and chance to use multiple attacks. It's important to remember to remain mobile against fiends, or at least attempt to disrupt their mobility. As long as they have to move more than a 5' step to engage, you're restricting their considerable full round attack actions.

## Support Specialist

In the case of fiends, the more you can do to distract the enemy while enhancing your side, the better. Summon creatures to swarm all over the advancing fiend, soaking up its special attacks and allowing your fighters to move into position. Do everything you can to enhance your side's hitting power—*bull's strength* increases attack bonus and damage, while *bear's endurance* throws your fighters some extra hit points (be careful, though—they're *not* lost first like temporary hit points), but more importantly gives bonuses to Fortitude saves, which are important if your foe is using poison or similar attacks. Don't forget to enhance Will saves with *owl's wisdom* to help safeguard your allies against fear effects, which fiends have in abundance. Many fiends have specific alignments, so *protection* and *magic circle* spells are perfectly suited to keep your allies safe, though this tactic is useless against neutral elementals.

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## Blue Dragon

Dragons are at the top of their local food chain, and they don't take kindly to lowlife adventurers challenging that status. Blues are among the nastiest of the bunch, with a powerful electrical attack, spell-like abilities and the usual collection of unpleasant dragon tricks. For the purpose of this discussion, we'll take a look at a CR 16 mature adult blue dragon. There are lots of options for a mage of your level—the main challenge here is to get to the dragon before he can get to you. This creature didn't survive to become a mature adult by being stupid. Warriors are nasty, yes, and rogues can sneak up from behind, but you're going to be seen as the blue dragon's greatest threat, and it's going to shred heaven and earth to get to you. Hit him hard and hit him fast, then for the sake of your continued existence, *get out of the way*.

## Blaster

Needless to say, keep well away from electricity-based spells and effects; blues eat lightning for breakfast. Again, if you can hit your foe with spells that avoid spell

resistance and have no saving throw, you're in good shape, but it will take a *lot* of these to dent the creature's massive collection of hit points. It will shrug off old faves like *magic missile* (maximum of 25 points of damage... 'tis but a scratch), so hit it with the heavy artillery. The deadly *polar ray* requires a ranged touch attack (nearly automatic for a 16th-level wizard or sorcerer), allows no saving throw, but is still affected by spell resistance. Don't be too intimidated by this, however. If you're a 16th-level wizard, you'll likely only need to roll a 6 or higher to overcome the beast's SR, or only a 2 with Greater Spell Penetration. Succeed, and you inflict an average of 56 points of damage. If you have the right metamagic feats, an empowered and maximized *scorching ray* will deal an average of 93 points of damage. Area effect spells will deal significantly less damage since they allow saves and even though Reflex is the dragon's weakest save, it is still +14. That will knock even a *delayed blast fireball* from a mage with Greater Spell Focus (evocation) down to roughly 75% of the damage from the out-of-the-box *polar ray*.

Then again, why bother with inflicting damage when you have a chance of knocking the big guy out with a single blow? Cast *finger of death* and see what happens. The DC is going to be 17 plus your relevant ability's modifier—by this time it should be +6 or so. You'd better have Greater Spell Focus (necromancy) by this time, so this will add another +2. Let's call it 25. Unfortunately for you, the blue's Fortitude save is +19, which means it has to roll higher than a 6 to save. By the odds, this means you've only got a 30% chance of killing the monster; the rest of the time you'll deal an average of 26.5 points of damage—about what you'd deal with a *cone of cold* or *delayed blast fireball* on a successful save. Far better to hit the guy with the most massive single-target damage spells you can, and leave the instant death attacks for more suitable prey.

## Controller

You've got a bit of a problem, unfortunately. As we've previously pointed out, most of your spells are enchantment spells, many of them mind-affecting. Dragons have strong saving throws in all three categories. The mature adult blue dragon has a +17 Will save, just slightly lower than its Fortitude. By this level, your save DC for *hold monster*, for example, will be around 23 if you have Greater Spell Focus (enchantment). The dragon will save 75% of the time. Again, this might be acceptable, especially if other alternatives have failed, but other spells have a better chance of success. Your best bet against blue dragons and similar creatures is to avoid that nasty saving throw. *Power words* are one good answer—*power word, blind* and *power word, stun* don't allow a save, but do require you to overcome a

22 SR, a much easier prospect than beating its Will save. Blinding or stunning the creature isn't quite as satisfying as killing or blasting it to atoms, but it buys precious time for your warriors and reduces the fearsome creature's capabilities considerably.

## Saboteur

If the dragon decides to fly, your options for limiting its mobility are severely limited (*solid fog* may slow it down for a turn or two, but not much longer). In this case, you should focus on making your group harder to locate and hit—seeding the battlefield with a variety of fog spells, or strengthening your group's position with *globe of invulnerability* or *antimagic field* to limit the dragon's ranged casting effectiveness. If you can catch your dragon in a cave complex or dungeon where it can't fly, this is less of a problem. Restricted space will make your job a bit easier, allowing you to reduce the dragon's mobility with well-placed walls and even the venerable *transmute rock to mud*, which can bring down the ceiling or place a huge mass of mud in the dragon's path, forcing it to slow down.

Many of your higher-level spells such as *forcecage* and *scintillating pattern* are ineffective against the dragon due to its size and hit dice. Surprisingly enough, in many cases you're better off casting lower level spells. The only exception to this is in the case of *symbols*, but these take a long time to cast and grant those nasty saving throws that, as we've previously seen, are very hard to overcome. You're better off committing other spells like *prismatic wall* to memory if you're a wizard.

## Support Specialist

Summon allies first; a couple of elementals or fiendish creatures may not last long against the dragon, but they'll buy time so you can focus on the most powerful support spells you have. Creatures that can fly and engage the dragon in the air are preferable. Be sure to slap *fly* on your warriors so they can take the fight to the dragon rather than sit and wait. Spread the *resist energy* (*electricity*) spells around judiciously to reduce the effectiveness of the dragon's breath weapon. *Iron body* will give you some protection when (note we don't say "if") the blue decides to pay personal attention to your well-being.

*Protection from spells* fend off the dragon's annoying spell-like abilities; the various *mass* ability enhancers (*cat's grace*, *bull's strength*, etc.) improve your entire group's saving throws, attacks and damage. *Greater heroism* gives substantial bonuses that will aid your party members when they finally get to close quarters.

*Displacement* offers a great advantage to the recipient, so it's best used when the dragon only has a few targets to choose from—like your beefy front line beatstick. *Haste* is another great buff to slap on your main damage member, allowing them to maximize their damage output in as short an amount of time as possible. The only catch is that when fighting a dragon you're going to be casting them a lot. Get ready to go through your complement of spells quickly, and don't let that blue get close enough to unleash a lighting bolt at you.

## Terrors

Terrors are simply big nasty creatures that don't fit into other categories. They include aberrations, constructs, evil fey and magical beasts, and usually come equipped with sharp fangs or claws. Almost all of them have low-light or darkvision, many are resistant or immune to magic, and many also have some hefty spells or spell-like abilities of their own. Worse, they're intelligent or at least cunning, and know enough to attack casters rather than their hulking armored bodyguards. Fortunately for you, they're often solitary or live in small groups, so with luck you'll be able to avoid them. Concealing yourself with *greater invisibility*, moving to an inaccessible location from which to throw your spells, or flying are all good ways of staying safe against these things.

Terrors' saving throws vary greatly. Aberrations have good Will saves. Fey get good Reflex and Will; magical beasts get good Reflex and Fortitude, while constructs get no good saves at all, so gear your spells to the exact type of terror you're facing.

## Blaster

As always, your job is pretty straightforward. Inflict damage, focus on damage spells with no saving throw, avoid those elemental and energy types that your foe might be immune to, and stay out of the battle, allowing the fighters to keep you safe. For creatures immune to your brand of magic, this is a good time to fill in one of your secondary roles.

## Controller

Magical beasts are your best targets in this category due to their lower Will save. Constructs are immune to most of your spells, while aberrations and fey have strong Will saves, so you might not be flexing your control role as strongly. Maybe this is a good time to cast that *magic missile* you've been holding in reserve and focus on a secondary role. Against susceptible targets,

Terrors			
Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Aberrations	d8	Will	Darkvision
Construct	d10	None	Low-light vision, darkvision, immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects and necromancy effects; also immune to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage or drain and just about anything affecting a living creature
Fey	d6	Reflex and Will	Low-light vision
Magical Beasts – see Critters for details			

you'll want to reduce their Will save with *mind fog* or try to hamper their effectiveness with *bestow curse*. *Ray of enfeeblement* (no save) and *ray of exhaustion* (Fortitude save partial) are particularly handy for non-construct terrors.

### Saboteur

Before anything else, protect yourself. If you can't get to an inaccessible position (see above), cast some mobility-reducing spells in your vicinity, and try to keep the fighter types between you and the terrors. As with other creatures, you'll want to conceal, obscure and obstruct, making these creatures have to work to find you and your party.

### Support Specialist

Terrors have a wide range of special attacks, most of which require various saving throws. If you're unfamiliar with your target's abilities, an appropriate Knowledge check may give you the information you need to best customize your party's buffs—whether you should be boosting your side's saves, enhancing your speed or increasing resistance to a particular energy type. *Magic weapon* or *greater magic weapon* makes your warriors' swords and axes that much more effective.

## Shadow Mastiffs

These frightful critters come in packs of up to a dozen. Big, black canines from the plane of shadow, shadow mastiffs are at their best in the darkness, and can terrify opponents with their howls. Your warriors will have their hands full dealing with the creatures' shadowblend ability, and will have to defend themselves against sonic attack, so do everything you can to help them out.

While torches, *light* and *continual light* don't affect them or remove the concealment effects of the mastiffs' shadowblend ability, *daylight* will eliminate it entirely. If you're a 5th-level wizard, however, you'll have only one

or at most two third-level spells, and in all likelihood you won't have *daylight* available unless you know you need it. If you are aware that there are such creatures of the dark in the vicinity, memorize this spell regardless of your archetype. Sorcerers will likely pass on selecting *daylight* when they finally do get access to third-level spells, so having a scroll or two on hand is worth it.

### Blaster

You have a similar problem with shadow mastiffs that you have with incorporeal undead. Their shadowblend special ability means that any ranged attacks you make have a 50% chance of missing. Worse yet, you lack a visible target for *magic missile*. The best thing you can do is reach into your backup preparations, and lead off with a *daylight* spell, negating their advantage. Failing that, stick to area effects. Full concealment doesn't help against a *fireball*, and since they tend to come in packs, a fireball will probably catch more than just one. If you're down to ranged touch attacks, consider casting *true strike* before attacking since it will not only aid your attack roll but will also negate the 50% miss chance from concealment. Situations like this are why every good mage has some handy spells available via scrolls or potions.

### Controller

Your task is a bit more straightforward, as shadowblend doesn't affect most of your spells, and the shadow mastiff has a relatively low Will save. Your usual run of enchantments—*color spray*, *daze monster*, *slow*, etc.—can neutralize the creature quite effectively, especially if you've boosted your enchantment spell's save DC with Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus.

### Saboteur

Though shadow mastiffs have that cool shadowblend thing, they move and fight the same as everyone else. They're just as hindered by *web* and *grease*, and just as likely to believe your illusionary images as any

other gullible target. Try to even the playing field as well—since the mastiffs already have total concealment, a *darkness* spell won't increase their miss chance, and imposes a 20% miss penalty when the mastiffs try to hit your party, as it affects even creatures with darkvision.

## Support Specialist

You can't do much to reduce a shadow mastiff's special defenses, so they're going to avoid damage from your warriors 50% of the time no matter what, unless of course you've cast *daylight*. Otherwise, your role here is much like when dealing with incorporeal creatures—improve your party's defense to make sure they survive long enough against those miss chances. A quick *blur* or *displacement* cast on your warriors imposes a miss chance on their opponents, providing a comparable bonus to balance out the mastiff's shadowblend abilities.

Only switch to offensive buffs once your party is well defended, to make the most of the opportunities when your warriors do finally land a hit. Meanwhile, a crowd of minions called up with *summon monster* won't hurt, especially if they keep the mastiffs occupied while your buffed party presses the attack.

# Toughs

Made up of giants, humanoids and monstrous humanoids, toughs are the “thugs” of the fantasy role-playing world. They are often encountered as raiding hordes, dungeon societies or the minions of more powerful villains. Humanoids often have some character levels, making their abilities unpredictable. What they lack in strength they can make up for in cunning and instinctive ferocity.

They're not necessarily stupid or animalistic, either—even a gang of ogres is going to figure out that the person shooting fire from their fingers is an important target. They'll attack the warriors, sure, but they may also sneak around (or in the case of giants, step over) your flanks to rush the mages, or pepper them with arrows. Don't let that happen. Again, keep yourself safe and don't expose yourself to undue risk.

## The Toughs

Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Giant	d8	Fort	Low-light vision
Humanoids	By character class usually		
Monstrous Humanoids	d8	Ref, Will	Darkvision

## Blaster

Take note of the fact that an ogre fights exactly the same whether it has 30 hit points or 3. You're better off killing foes instead of wounding them, but if you have a chance to catch several ogres in a fireball, your warriors will be able to Cleave through the enemy more effectively if that's their melee *modus operandi*.

In general, you should focus your high-damage-output, single-target spells on the biggest and toughest of the toughs. If there's an ogre chieftain wearing armor and holding what you suspect to be a magical sword, blast him early and often with your *scorching rays* or *magic missiles*. If there's an orc officer giving orders and looking authoritative, blast him. Toughs also can be accompanied by spellcasters—if you can get a shot at one, take it. If you can catch a number of minions in an area effect as well, all the better. If you're lucky, you'll deprive the enemy of some firepower. Otherwise, reserve your area spells like *fireball* and *lightning bolt* for times when the enemy clusters together in easily blast-able groups.

## Controller

Your spells are particularly effective against toughs. Most are of relatively low level and vulnerable to mind-affecting control spells like *charm* and *domination*. Again, your best bet is turning your enemies against each other—grab a couple of low-level warriors and have them club their shaman or chieftain. Lower-level thugs are especially vulnerable to traditional standbys like *cause fear*, *sleep* and *deep slumber*. Do anything you can to split up the enemy, letting your side take down uncontrolled toughs individually and coming back to mop up the unlucky creatures victimized by your spells.

## Saboteur

Toughs are a lot like your own adventuring party—they use missile weapons, magic, and the like to take enemy troops out individually, rather than in groups. Frustrate those plans with *obscuring mist*, *sleet storm* or *fog cloud* to foil the archers and conceal your side's movements and toss in your favorite mobility-reducing spells like *web* and *grease* to slow them down. If they have an especially nasty-looking monster or chieftain, imprison him in a *forcecage*, but be aware that this also provides him with some additional protection until you're ready to deal with him specifically.

The enemy is going to be very tactically aware, and wants to cover all the options as well, and this is something else you can use against them. If they're looking for ambushes, give them one—an illusory one, anyway. A large illusionary monster or gang of fighters appearing on the toughs' flank is certain to distract them, giving you more time to pick them off and cut their numbers before they realize they've been had.

## Support Specialist

Toughs themselves don't generally have a lot of special attacks or spell-like abilities. If they've got a spellcaster, help your group deal with him first, but otherwise most of the enhancements that you provide your side will be against mundane attacks. Protect your side from enemy missile fire—*protection from arrows* is an obvious choice if you're facing limited incoming fire, but use *blur* or *displacement* if you encounter more enemies than members in your party. *Cat's grace* boosts the Dexterity bonus to AC and the ranged attacks of your own archers; *haste* lets your side go through low-end toughs like a buzz saw. *Keen edge* and *magic weapon* both enhance your side's damage output. *Summon* spells will be particularly effective here—throw a few monsters into the mix and the enemy will be forced to hack through your creatures to get anywhere near your party, while suffering scrapes and bruises—not to mention greater risks of suffering attacks of opportunity or flanked attacks.

The examples below include two different types of tough—the small but dogged kobolds and the big, largely solitary, magic-using ogre mage—as a means of showing how to vary tactics depending upon your opponents' strengths and weaknesses.

## Ogre Mage

The ogre mage is a tough customer with some spell-like abilities. Take these away, however, and you're essentially dealing with a slightly smarter ogre that likes to disappear from view; don't be intimidated. Neutralize the ogre mage's special abilities and let your warriors whittle him down to size.

### Blaster

Two words: spell resistance. This is why you have Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration. If you don't have Spell Penetration, or are low enough level that you don't have a 50% chance of beating his spell resistance, that's why you have a backup strategy. *Glitterdust* is a blaster's best friend in situations like this.

The good news is that if you can penetrate his spell resistance, the ogre mage has a very weak Reflex save and a poor touch AC. Focus on those weaknesses with spells such as *fireball* and *scorching ray* (it can't regenerate fire damage). *Cloudkill* avoids spell resistance, but allows the ogre mage a Fortitude save, his best. Just the same, even if it succeeds on the save, it will still take some Constitution damage, which may cause it to lose hit points, will reduce its future Fortitude saves, and reduces its Concentration check, making it easier to disrupt its magical abilities.

If you've forced the ogre mage to flee using its *gaseous form* ability, now's the chance to strike. If you've got a high-damage spell left, use it; if you get through its spell resistance, you have a good chance of finishing the beast once and for all. Be quick, though—you'll probably have only one round before the blasted thing escapes through a keyhole or crack in the wall.

### Controller

The ogre mage's Will save isn't all that great, so he'll have to fall back on his spell resistance to avoid your *charm monster* and *confusion* spells. Most of your usual spells will be effective here, especially those such as *blindness/deafness* or *bestow curse*, and other spells that interfere with the ogre's ability to use its spell-like abilities. Spell Penetration and Spell Focus will both help in this case as well. If the opportunity presents itself, a well timed *enervation* can dramatically reduce the ogre mage's abilities—sure you have to hit with a touch attack and bypass spell resistance, but lowering the ogre mage's saves and effective caster level will make him much easier to dispatch.

### Saboteur

Most of the usual advice for saboteurs holds true when fighting ogre magi, with one exception. Ogre mages can fly; this alone makes them a more threatening opponent, since they can swoop over your fighters and descend upon you or other more vulnerable party members. Flight is tough to counter—*walls* have to be on the ground, and *gust of wind* is ineffective due to the creature's size. Better to continue targeting the ogre mage with hindrance spells like *solid fog*. *Slow* is very effective, as it forces an ogre mage to choose between moving, attacking, and using its spell-like abilities, thus depriving it of many of its advantages.

Though they're limited, those spell-like abilities can be frustrating. An invisible ogre mage can lurk nearby, cast *darkness* and then blast the party with *cone of*

*cold*, wade in and take out your stragglers or weaker party members before anyone knows what hit them. Keep *dispel magic* handy in case the fight starts getting nasty. Forcing an ogre mage to waste one or two of its spell-like abilities by dispelling them will help turn the fight your way.

## Support Specialist

As always, the job of protecting the party and keeping the ogre mage from mopping the floor with them falls to you. Check out the enemy's spell-like abilities: *darkness* and *invisibility* at will, *charm person*, *cone of cold*, *gaseous form*, *polymorph* and *sleep* once per day. *Protection from evil* is a great spell when facing an obviously evil enemy like an ogre mage, improving both your party's AC and saves. A *lesser globe of invulnerability* takes the teeth out of several of the ogre mage's spell-like abilities, forcing the ogre mage to choose a different tactic.

As with most encounters, anything that boosts attacks and ability to withstand damage is welcome, as always. When not accompanied by ogres, ogre mages travel alone or in pairs. Cast *haste* to help outpace the enemy and concentrate multiple attacks on a single individual, *stoneskin* to soak up damage, and *keen edge* on weapons with good critical threat ranges to increase the chance of landing a devastating single hit.

## Undead

Who doesn't know about undead? They come in two types — nasty and worse. Actually, make that corporeal and incorporeal. Further, undead are immune to some of the best spells in the controller's arsenal, including mind-affecting magic, as well as paralysis, poison, critical hits, stunning and other useful effects scattered among all the archetypes. Also keep in mind that undead are completely immune to any spell requiring a Fortitude save, unless the effect also works on objects. Low end undead are only slightly more of a nuisance than critters, generally gaining their strength through superior numbers. More powerful undead have a wide array of abilities, and incorporeal undead can only be affected by magic or force effects, making your mage even more important in the fight.

## Blaster

In the case of most undead, follow the same advice given for toughs. Deliver damage and lots of it, focusing on any obvious leaders or more powerful individuals — the vampiric zombie-master, skeletal commander, lich and so on. Obviously, if the enemy is under the control of a necromancer, focus your meanest spells on him, though unless he's stupid, he's going to be well-protected and possibly out of range. If it's a mixed group, take down incorporeal undead first, since they're going to be far more difficult for the average warrior to face, especially if they don't have magic weapons. Incorporeal creatures have the added advantage of avoiding any source of corporeal damage 50% of the time (from standard weapons to energy types like fire, ice or electricity). *Magic missile* (and other force effects) and *sunburst* don't have this problem; use them when you can.

A blaster loves facing hordes of low level undead like zombies and skeletons, where their notoriously low Reflex saves make them prime candidates for area effect spells like *fireball* and *lightning bolt*. Even *burning hands* can have a decided impact for lower level mages. This is especially true when facing skeletal or zombified versions of larger creatures, which suffer Dexterity penalties based on their size.

## Controller

Undead are immune to most of the nastiest tricks in your arsenal — mind-affecting magic, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease and death magic. However, you do have access to necromantic spells such as *ray of enfeeblement*, which affects non-living targets. *Command undead* and *halt undead* were built for just this situation, so use them liberally. There are spells available in other schools as well, such as *slow* and *grasping hand*. If the enemy is led by a living necromancer or similar opponent, you've got yourself a live target and can focus your other spells on him. Nail him with everything in the arsenal, and let the warriors and blasters deal with his shambling minions.

## Saboteur

Lesser undead gain strength from numbers, so try to split them up and defeat them in the order of your

### Undead

Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Undead	d12	Will	No Constitution; darkvision; immune to all mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage and so on

choosing as with other low-hit point creatures. Physical impediments such as *walls* and *webs* don't slow down incorporeal undead, so you'll have to be craftier. If they're intelligent, they can be fooled by illusions, but *wall of force* and *forcecage* are far more effective. If you've selected any of the "hand" spells (*crushing hand*, *grasping hand*, *interposing hand*) use 'em—they're force effects and are well suited to dealing with incorporeal creatures.

## Support Specialist

Again, treat corporeal undead like most other creatures—buff your allies' strength and damage output, boost their saving throws, and so on. Incorporeal undead are another matter—if your fighters don't have magic weapons, make sure they have them, at least temporarily, with *magic weapon* and *greater magic weapon*. Incorporeal creatures are still going to avoid damage half the time, unless your fighters also have *ghost touch* weapons, but it's a lot better than the alternative. Now's the perfect time to spread around the *mage armor*, too—it's a force effect and provides a modicum of protection from an incorporeal creature's touch attacks, even though its AC bonus won't stack with regular armor.

## Spectres

Mid-level incorporeal undead, spectres are bad news if they show up in numbers, and they can be encountered in groups of up to 11. Their attacks add negative levels, they can create spawn, and they're harder to turn than normal. Parties without magic weapons are in for a deadly struggle against spectres, and even those with magical assistance will have their work cut out for them.

## Blaster

Use your *magic missiles* first (and *sunburst* if you have it, but if you do, you're probably going to win anyway), then move on to *scorching ray* and other spells without saving throws. They're "corporeal" type damage, which the spectres can avoid 50% of the time, but if you hit them with enough, you'll eventually get through. As always, stay out of the way—two negative levels per hit is going to knock you out of commission quickly; a warrior can deal with the damage better.

## Controller

If you've got anti-undead spells, now's the time to use them. Use *command undead* and *halt undead*

judiciously. If you've improved your save DCs with Spell Focus, your odds improve that they won't save, but it's still a gamble. You can also load the enemy up with debilitating effects—*bestow curse* and *slow* can hinder them enough to give your warriors and blasters a better chance of connecting. *Ray of enfeeblement* will make it harder for them to hit, incredibly important since they're making touch attacks against you and your party.

## Saboteur

Forget about *grease*, *web*, *walls of iron* or *stone*—incorporeal creatures go right through them. *Wall of fire* or *force* at least have a chance of inflicting damage or slowing down the spectres as they either walk through them or spend the time to move around. Direct the path the specters need to take with force effect spells like *forcecage*, *resilient sphere* and *interposing hand*. *Mage's faithful hound* attacks as a magic weapon, though it still gets the 50% miss chance on incorporeal creatures. Use *slow* to bog them down if you can get several at once. Keep them out of melee with the warriors for as long as possible, so your archers (hopefully armed with some kind of magic missile weapon) or your blasters can cut down their hit points or knock off a couple.

## Support Specialist

Between offense and defense, you need to lean toward defense. The spectres' most fearsome attack is their energy drain, which imposes a whopping two negative levels with every successful hit. Mitigate this by casting *blur* or *displacement* to grant your party a miss chance comparable to the spectres. Then, pump up the AC as quickly as possible—*protection from evil* offers several benefits, as does *cat's grace*. Since *mage armor* is a force effect, it also helps against touch attacks. Finally, if you're a summoning mage and are high enough level to bring in some incorporeal allies of your own, your party's combat effectiveness increases dramatically.

Only after seeing to the groups' defenses should you start boosting offensive output—since incorporeal creatures have a 50% chance to avoid corporeal damage, you don't want your precious buff spells to be useless 50% of the time.

## Enemy Spellcasters

Enemy spellcasters come in a wide range of creature types, but common casting creatures are listed below. This group doesn't always fit into a nice and

Enemy Spellcasters			
Type	HD	Good Saves	Special Notes
Fey	d6	Ref and Will	Low-light vision, spell-like abilities
Humanoids	As class, but generally high Will save		
Outsiders	d8	All	Darkvision, do not need to eat or sleep, potential levels of SR or DR

tidy category. The vast majority of enemy spellcasters will likely be humanoid races with some wizard or sorcerer class levels. But a variety of undead, dragons, outsiders and other already nasty creatures can be even more dangerous when they bring magic to the mix.

Nothing ruins a good day of adventuring like encountering enemy spellcasters. Facing a formidable mage will quickly set even the most seasoned warrior cowering in his cuirass. All those hit points won't help them when the caster starts tossing ranged touch attacks or spells requiring Will saves against your brawny, albeit gullible, party members.

For classed enemy spellcasters, just keep in mind your own vulnerabilities (well, the vulnerabilities of a petty, undisciplined mage), and use this to your advantage. Casting classes tend to have strong Will saves but poor Fortitude and Reflex saves. Casters will often have considerably lower ACs than their warrior brethren, and fewer hit points to boot. By preying on these weaknesses, and relentlessly pummeling them with your own magical onslaught, you'll make quick work of enemy casters.

Facing enemy spellcasters is also a key reason why every archetype will benefit from knowing *dispel magic*, *greater dispel magic* and *break enchantment*. If you don't know 'em, make sure you have scrolls or wands handy. These spells have numerous applications, and certainly have a place in any battle plan against an opposing caster.

### Breaking the Game: Avoid Readied Spell Disruption

Here's a delightfully dastardly combat tactic your crafty mage can use to confound your foes and your GM. Whenever you're facing enemies that might have readied actions to disrupt your spellcasting (with spells or attacks, in hopes of forcing you to succeed at a nigh impossible Concentration check), give this a shot.

Simply cast a quickened spell or *feather fall* before that important spell that you really have to make sure gets cast. Casting either a quickened spell or *feather fall* will trigger your enemies' readied actions – but they can't be disrupted! As noted on the Concentration skill description, only spells with a casting time of 1 action or more can be disrupted. Even if the enemy damages you with their readied action, that damage won't carry over to your standard action spell casting since the damage was done before the act of casting the important spell.

If your GM rules that the damage from the readied action would still present a distraction, you're still in good shape. Now you can gauge how difficult the required Concentration check will be to cast your important spell (DC 10 + damage received), and decide whether or not to attempt the Concentration check, or perform an action that won't require a check instead. Now that all those enemy archers and mages wasted their actions trying to disrupt *feather fall*, let loose with that maximized *fireball*!

### Blaster

Whether the spellcaster is arcane or divine, one thing is constant: spellcasters don't have strong Reflex saves. Area effect damage is very effective against them—doubly so against arcane casters who also have notoriously low hit points. By blasting, you can kill two birds with one fireball: you start whittling away at the spellcaster's goons and blast the heck out of him at the same time. Arcane spellcasting types also tend to have weak Fortitude saves, making them prime targets for spells like *finger of death* or *disintegrate*.

At all levels, it is often a better idea to ready an action to disrupt their spellcasting rather than simply damage them on your own turn. At the risk of not acting (if the enemy does something other than cast a spell), you have a very good chance of not only injuring your foe but preventing him from casting spells, as well. At low levels, spells like *magic missile* (or *fireball* if you can catch a few other enemies in its area) are ideal for disrupting spells. At higher levels, consider spells like *disintegrate* or *finger of death* (if the spellcaster fails the save, he's dead and doesn't get to cast the spell; if he makes the save, he takes quite a bit of damage and probably can't make the Concentration check to finish the spell).

At higher levels, you can expect your enemies to have some magical defenses. Consider using a quickened *magic missile* to check for spell turning or gauge spell resistance before unleashing a targeted spell like

*finger of death* on him. You wouldn't want to have to save against your own pumped up DCs.

## Controller

You've got a variety of options available to deal with spellcasters, letting you dramatically reduce their effectiveness whether you target their bodies or their minds. *Blindness/deafness* targets a mage's weak Fortitude save while being cast from a safe distance; being blinded means all the caster's opponents are considered to have total concealment (50% miss chance), while being deafened imparts a 20% chance of spell failure when casting spells with verbal components (arcane or divine). *Enervation* and *energy drain* also take advantage of poor Fortitude saves, and can lower the effective casting level of the target—impacting the range, duration and numerous spell effects, as well as forcing the loss of high level spell slots. While *slow* does allow a Will save, generally the strongest save for a caster, it can also affect the spellcaster's nearby minions, providing some flexibility and a chance to impair multiple targets at once.

*Touch of idiocy* (with no save), *contagion* and *bestow curse* can dramatically lower a spellcaster's primary casting attribute, forcing the loss of his highest available spell slots and lowering the save DC against his entire arsenal of spells. Of course, we can't forget the classic targeted spell for killing mages—the fabulous *feeblemind*. While *mind fog* does allow a Will save, the potential to affect multiple targets and dramatically impair Will saves against future spells makes it a handy spell when facing a caster with multiple goons.

## Saboteur

*Black tentacles* will often end an encounter with a spellcaster by itself, but if that doesn't work, you still have a lot of options. Most spellcasters fare poorly when standing toe-to-toe with a warrior, so all you need to do is keep the spellcaster busy while your warriors can make their way to him. For mages that need to rely on line of sight to target their spells, *obscuring mist* and *fog cloud* can make their life difficult.

The various *hand* spells are also well suited to take on spellcasters. Rather than redirect movement as you would against warriors, use *interposing hand* to provide some additional AC and slow the caster down should he need to maneuver for a better shot. Unless the enemy has *freedom of movement* or *dimension door* and a phenomenal Concentration skill, a single casting of *grasping hand* can end the threat posed by an enemy spellcaster.

## Support Specialist

If you have access to some creature summoning and are in range, plop down summoned creatures right next to enemy spellcasters. If you can summon several at once, use a few to attack directly, while others ready actions to disrupt spellcasting attempts. Don't forget to take advantage of summoned creatures' abilities, or let a few of your pets attempt special combat maneuvers to trip, grapple or bull rush spellcasters.

Make sure you buff your party's saves first, and armor class if the spellcaster is supporting his own minions. If you can determine the role of the caster you're up against, you can fine tune your defenses accordingly—raise your touch ACs when facing front end blasters, improve your saves against back end blasters and controllers, and upgrade your maneuverability against saboteurs.

As we already mentioned, a grappled spellcaster is soon a dead spellcaster. Here's another excellent opportunity to use *enlarge person*. The +5 grapple bonus it grants (size and Strength bonuses) is significant when your warrior or monk allies grapple the enemy. They may not need the help to pin a scrawny mage, but they'll definitely put it to good use when dealing with an enemy druid or battle cleric.

## Action Plan

Your final step before combat is putting together all relevant factors and seeing how you can best contribute to your party's combat efforts. Though you may not get the sheer joy of close-in melee combat and slaughtering hordes of orcs with a broadsword or axe, you will definitely capture your share of the glory, whether by incinerating huge numbers of foes, turning them against one another, or by boosting the fortunes and strength of your party with a few well-placed buffing spells.

This section deals with the particulars of combat—how to maximize your potential, hold the enemy at bay and give your party the chance it needs to overcome its foes. Though we can't cover every single eventuality—and your GM is certainly going to be working hard to come up with new ones that no one can anticipate—the following information gives a good cross-section of tactics and ideas for dealing with many different situations.

## Touch Attacks

Touch attacks can be quite useful—*touch of idiocy* can severely cripple an enemy spellcaster, *vampiric touch* has no saving throw and transfers bunch of hit points

to you, *ghoul touch* is a low-level spell that paralyzes foes and sickens surrounding creatures. Touch attacks are especially useful against well armored creatures, since touch attacks bypass all shield, armor and natural armor bonuses. Of course there's a drawback to all these spells — they require you to touch the enemy, and while they don't directly provoke attacks of opportunity (since your charged spell allows you to be considered "armed" for purposes of delivering the touch attack), they nevertheless leave you dangerously close to the enemy.

Certainly, running in and delivering a quick touch attack as the chance arises may be worth the risk, but in general, you need to keep yourself safe. Alternatives for delivering touch attacks include having your familiar do it — which, of course, puts your precious pet at risk — or, better yet, using *spectral hand*, which allows you to cast up to 4th-level touch spells (including all the spells listed above) from a substantial distance away and gives you a +2 bonus to your touch attacks to boot. Remember, warriors are a dime a dozen — a good spellcaster is worth his weight in gold pieces, so don't put yourself unduly at risk by delivering touch attacks when there are better alternatives.

## Seeking Safety

In all likelihood, you're going to be low character on the totem pole when it comes to hit points. Your job isn't to get hurt, it's to do the hurting. There's no shame in staying safe. Check out the terrain and find the best position to observe the battlefield, while at the same time gaining cover and/or concealment. If you're especially paranoid, you can use *web* or *move earth* to further protect yourself.

If you want a little more stealth and mobility *invisibility* will keep you safe as long as you don't attack anyone directly (which is great for casters who rely on summoned pets to do their fightin' for them). If you're a blaster or a controller, you'll want to cast *greater invisibility*; luckily for saboteurs and support mages, spells that affect the battlefield or buff your allies won't break *invisibility*, and thus make it less likely that the enemy will be able to see or target you.

## Flying

One of the best ways to avoid melee combat is simply to remove yourself from the battlefield. *Fly* enables you to literally rise above the fray, making you effectively immune to standard, terrestrially-bound melee types. Of course, it isn't always ideal, as a flying mage is nothing short of an arrow magnet, and a sitting duck for enemy spellcasters. A few protective spells will help lessen this

threat, but you may want to avoid flying if the enemy has large numbers of missile troops. Of course, you can *fly* and be *invisible* too, which eliminates many of these issues and will cause your foes untold consternation as they try to figure out where you are. Beware of mages with *true seeing* or *see invisibility*, however.

## Communications

The mage's role in maintaining communications between party members isn't often explored, but if you're engaged in any kind of complex tactical situation, the importance of communications can't be overstated. The mage has a number of tools at his disposal and one of the most useful is the 0-level spell *message*, which allows free communication between you and any party member within range for 10 minutes per level, more than enough to maintain communications for an entire combat. Similarly, a raven familiar, which is both intelligent and can speak, can carry messages between party members and scout enemy positions.

## Enemy Saving Throws

The enemy's first line of defense against magic is their saving throws. Against foes without spell resistance, focus on spells with no saving throw such as *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* and *vampiric touch*. Against large numbers of foes, especially low-level hordes, *cloudkill* is a good choice. Of course, you're not always going to be using spells without saving throws, and nothing beats the massive damage (and satisfying "bang") of a well-placed *fireball* amidst a rampaging horde. You'll want to boost your save DCs with Spell Focus and Greater Spell Focus in your chosen schools, and sorcerers can use Heighten Spell to increase the spell's effective level and DC on the fly.

## Spell Resistance

More powerful enemies have a second line of defense against magic — spell resistance. Luckily, you've got similar options in dealing with this defense. Some spells which bypass spell resistance may be tempting, like *acid fog* or *acid arrow*, but they're often far less effective than other spells, even if there is a chance of resistance. Luckily, a lot of great effects, like summon spells and all your buff spells, don't need to worry about spell resistance. As you progress in levels and start encountering spell resistant foes, take Spell Penetration, and eventually Greater Spell Penetration. With enough levels and the right feats, spell resistance becomes more of an annoyance than a solid defense for your foes — so you can still roll up your sleeves and dish out the hurting with aplomb.

# Appendix I

# Core Spells by Archetype

This is not a complete list of all possible spells for each archetype. Rather, these lists focus on the most versatile and reliable spells per level for each archetype. Keep in mind that **Chapter Six: Spell Selection by Archetype** also suggests cross-archetype spells, and spells best suited to metamagic augmentation.

## Blaster Spells by Level

0 level - *acid splash* (c), *ray of frost* (ev), *disrupt undead* (n)

1st level - *burning hands* (ev), *chill touch* (n), *magic missile* (ev), *shocking grasp* (ev)

2nd level - *acid arrow* (c), *flaming sphere* (ev), *scorching ray* (ev)

3rd level - *fireball* (ev), *lightning bolt* (ev), *vampiric touch* (n), *flame arrow* (t)

4th level - *ice storm* (ev), *phantasmal killer* (i), *shout* (ev)

5th level - *cone of cold* (ev), *blight* (n)

6th level - *chain lightning* (ev), *circle of death* (n), *disintegrate* (t), *freezing sphere* (ev), *undead to death* (n)

7th level - *delayed blast fireball* (ev), *finger of death* (n), *mage's sword* (ev), *prismatic spray* (ev)

8th level - *clenched fist* (ev), *horrid wilting* (n), *polar ray* (ev), *shout, greater* (ev), *sunburst* (ev), *symbol of death* (n)

9th level - *meteor swarm* (ev), *power word kill* (en), *wail of the banshee* (n), *weird* (i)

Key: The letter in parentheses after spell name indicates school:

a = abjuration, c = conjuration, d = divination,  
en = enchantment, ev = evocation, i = illusion,  
n = necromancy, t = transmutation

## Controller Spells by Level

0 level - *daze* (en), *flare* (ev), *touch of fatigue* (n)

1st level - *cause fear* (n), *charm person* (en), *color spray* (i), *hypnotism* (en), *ray of enfeeblement* (n), *reduce person* (t), *sleep* (en)

2nd level - *blindness/deafness* (n), *daze monster* (en), *ghoul touch* (n), *hideous laughter* (en), *scare* (n), *touch of idiocy* (en)

3rd level - *deep slumber* (en), *hold person* (en), *slow* (t), *suggestion* (en)

4th level - *bestow curse* (n), *charm monster* (en), *confusion* (en), *contagion* (n), *crushing despair* (en), *enervation* (n), *fear* (n), *geas, lesser* (en), *rainbow pattern* (i), *resilient sphere* (ev)

5th level - *baleful polymorph* (t), *dominate person* (en), *feeblemind* (en), *hold monster* (en), *mind fog* (en), *waves of fatigue* (n)

6th level - *eyebite* (n), *flesh to stone* (t), *suggestion, mass* (en)

7th level - *grasping hand* (ev), *hold person, mass* (en), *insanity* (en), *power word blind* (en), *prismatic spray* (ev), *waves of exhaustion* (n)

8th level - *binding* (en), *charm monster, mass* (en), *demand* (en), *maze* (c), *power word stun* (en)

9th level - *crushing hand* (ev), *dominate monster* (en), *energy drain* (n), *hold monster, mass* (en)

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## Saboteur Spells by Level

0 level - *ghost sound* (i), *dancing lights* (ev)

1st level - *alarm* (a), *animate rope* (t), *grease* (c), *hold portal* (a), *obscuring mist* (c), *summon swarm* (c)

2nd level - *arcane lock* (a), *darkness* (ev), *fog cloud* (c), *glitterdust* (c), *hypnotic pattern* (i), *magic mouth* (i), *minor image* (i), *obscure object* (a), *web* (c)

3rd level - *arcane sight* (d), *magic circle vs. chaos/law/good/evil* (a), *major image* (i), *sleet storm* (c), *stinking cloud* (c), *wind wall* (ev)

4th level - *arcane eye* (d), *black tentacles* (c), *hallucinatory terrain* (i), *resilient sphere* (ev), *solid fog* (c), *wall of fire* (e), *wall of ice* (e)

5th level - *cloudkill* (c), *mage's faithful hound* (c), *mind fog* (e), *mirage arcana* (i), *persistent image* (i), *symbol of sleep* (en), *transmute rock to mud* (t), *wall of force* (ev), *wall of stone* (c)

6th level - *acid fog* (c), *antimagic field* (a), *globe of invulnerability* (a), *permanent image* (i), *repulsion* (a), *symbol of fear* (n), *symbol of persuasion* (en), *wall of iron* (c)

7th level - *project image* (i), *reverse gravity* (t), *symbol of stunning* (en), *symbol of weakness* (n)

8th level - *antipathy* (en), *incendiary cloud* (c), *prismatic wall* (a), *prying eyes, greater* (d), *scintillating pattern* (i), *symbol of death* (n), *symbol of insanity* (en)

9th level - *prismatic sphere* (a), *refuge* (c)

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## Support Specialist Spells by Level

0 level - *resistance* (a)

1st level - *endure elements* (a), *enlarge person* (t), *expeditious retreat* (t), *jump* (t), *levitate* (t), *mage armor* (c), *magic weapon* (t), *protection from chaos/law/good/evil* (a), *shield* (a), *summon monster I* (c), *truestrike* (d)

2nd level - *bear's endurance* (t), *blur* (i), *bull's strength* (t), *cat's grace* (t), *eagle's splendor* (t), *fox's cunning* (t), *invisibility* (i), *mirror image* (i), *owl's wisdom* (t), *protection from arrows* (a), *resist energy* (a), *spider climb* (t), *summon monster II* (c)

3rd level - *displacement* (i), *fly* (t), *gaseous form* (t), *haste* (t), *heroism* (en), *invisibility sphere* (i), *keen edge* (t), *magic circle vs. chaos/law/good/evil* (a), *magic weapon, greater* (t), *protection from energy* (a), *summon monster III* (c)

4th level - *enlarge person*, *mass* (t), *fire shield* (ev), *globe of invulnerability, lesser* (a), *polymorph* (t), *stoneskin* (a), *summon monster IV* (c)

5th level - *mage's faithful hound* (c), *summon monster V* (c), *teleport* (c)

6th level - *antimagic field* (a), *bear's endurance, mass* (t), *bull's strength, mass* (t), *cat's grace, mass* (t), *eagle's splendor, mass* (t), *fox's cunning, mass* (t), *globe of invulnerability* (a), *heroism, greater* (en), *owl's wisdom, mass* (t), *summon monster VI* (c), *true seeing* (d)

7th level - *invisibility, mass* (i), *spell turning* (a), *statue* (t), *summon monster VII* (c), *teleport, greater* (c)

8th level - *iron body* (t), *moment of prescience* (d), *protection from spells* (a), *summon monster VIII* (c)

9th level - *foresight* (d), *freedom* (a), *shapechange* (t), *summon monster IX* (c), *time stop* (t)

## Appendix II

# Spell Saves vs. Target DCs

The number listed when cross-referencing the *Target's Saving Throw* and the spellcaster's *Save DC* is the percent chance the target will successfully save versus the effect. For example, a sorcerer casts a DC 15 *fireball* at an orc warrior with a Reflex save of +2. The orc warrior has a 40% chance of making the saving throw.

**95% success cap:** Despite having a save high enough to otherwise guarantee success, a natural roll of 1 on the d20 is an automatic failure.

**5% failure cap:** Despite having a save low enough to otherwise guarantee failure, a natural roll of 20 on the d20 is an automatic success.

Save DC	Target's Saving Throw																				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
11	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
12	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
13	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
14	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
15	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
16	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
17	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95	95
18	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95	95
19	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95	95
20	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95	95
21	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	95
22	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95
23	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90
24	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85
25	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
26	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75
27	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
28	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
29	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
30	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55
31	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
32	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45
33	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
34	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35
35	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	15	20	25	30

# Appendix III

## Caster Check vs. Target's Spell Resistance

The number listed when cross-referencing the *Target's Spell Resistance* and the caster's *Adjusted Caster Level* for a spell resistance check (which includes bonuses from special abilities or feats like Spell Penetration) indicates the chance a caster has of successfully over-

coming spell resistance. Unlike saving throws, a 1 is not an automatic failure, and a 20 is not an automatic success when rolling a caster check to overcome spell resistance.

Adjusted Caster Level	Target Spell Resistance																				
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
6	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0	0
7	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0	0
8	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	0
9	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0
10	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5
11	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10
12	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15
13	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20
14	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25
15	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30
16	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35
17	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35
18	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40
19	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45
20	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50
21	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55
22	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60
23	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70	65
24	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75	70
25	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	90	85	80	75

# Appendix IV

## Average Spell Damage by Die Type

### Average Damage per d4, 6 or 8

To determine the average damage for one of your mage's spells, first choose a spell that inflicts damage in multiples of d4, like *burning hands* (or *fireball* for d6, or *horrid wilting* for d8). Find the spell's save DC in the left hand column and an anticipated saving throw on the top row. Cross-referencing the two brings you to the average damage per die. Multiply this by the spell's damage output to find the total average damage.

For example, a 5th-level sorcerer casting *burning hands* with a DC 15 Reflex save inflicts 5d4 damage to a target

with a +4 Reflex save, for an average of 9.4 points of damage ( $1.88 \times 5$ ).

A 10th-level wizard casting a *fireball* with a DC 19 Reflex save inflicts 10d6 fire damage to a target with a +8 Reflex save, for an average of 26.3 points of damage ( $2.63 \times 10$ ).

A 20th-level wizard casting *horrid wilting* with a DC 26 Fortitude save inflicts 20d8 damage to a plant creature with a +12 Fortitude save, for an average of 74.2 points of damage ( $3.71 \times 20$ ).

Save DC	Average Damage per d4																			
	Saving Throw																			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
11	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
12	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
13	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
14	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
15	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
16	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
17	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
18	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
19	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31
20	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31	1.31
21	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38	1.31
22	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44	1.38
23	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50	1.44
24	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56	1.50
25	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63	1.56
26	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63
27	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69	1.63
28	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75	1.69
29	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81	1.75
30	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88	1.81
31	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94	1.88
32	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00	1.94
33	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06	2.00
34	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13	2.06
35	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.38	2.31	2.25	2.19	2.13



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